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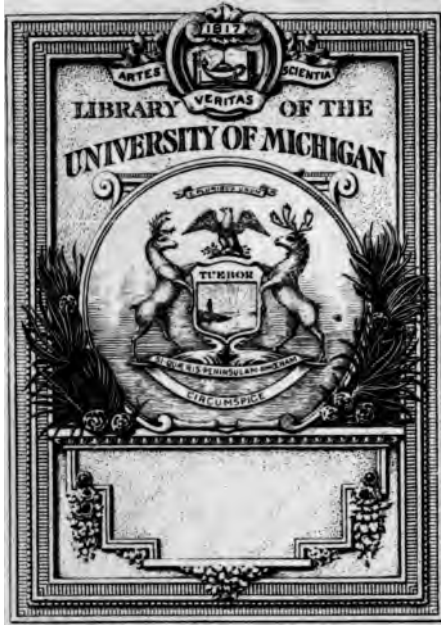
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# PAX

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LORENZO MARROQUIN

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**PAX**  
**(PEACE)**



*BRENTANO'S HISPANO-AMERICAN SERIES*

ISAAC GOLDBERG, PH.D., EDITOR

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**P A X**  
(PEACE)

BY  
**LORENZO MARROQUIN**

TRANSLATED BY  
**ISAAC GOLDBERG, PH.D.**  
AND  
**W. V. SCHIERBRAND, PH.D.**



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## INTRODUCTION

The name of the much-wracked republic of Colombia is indissolubly linked with that of the most popular novel that has thus far come out of Spanish America,—the tender, idyllic romance entitled *María*, by Jorge Isaacs (1837–1875).\* The nationalistic strain in Isaacs was carried forward by later novelists, few of whom have been found worthy of serious consideration by lovers of belles lettres. Among these the outstanding exception is Lorenzo Marroquín (died 1918), whose *Pax* created a furore at the time of its appearance. For this there were, of course, non-literary reasons. The caustic satire of the book, its spirited caricatures of loathsome national types, imparted to it all the political zest of an old *roman à clef*, and more than one public figure believed that he had been held up to scorn in the pages of this colorful, moving novel of love, intrigue, religion, politics and revolution. Yet this is but a superficial aspect of the book, which as a whole should possess for us Americans of the North the attraction exercised by a work that is written in hot sincerity, portraying the evils that consume an author's beloved country. This, perhaps, is the prime impulse in *Pax*; it was born of a high religious faith in the service of an ardent patriotism. The author is thoroughly imbued with his milieu; he knows the people and their customs, the landscape and its secrets, the vanishing nobility and their foundering ideals. If he has not caught the ideals of the rising lower classes, that is because his novel is, in a sense, the defiant swan-song of a departing era. Even to one whose world-philosophy looks in a different direction, Marro-

\* Isaacs' hereditary influences and early environment were of a cosmopolitan nature. His father was an English Jew, his mother a Spaniard, and he was Colombian by birth. He early achieved note through his poems, a volume of which was published in 1865. *María* (1867) established his fame. His poetry, like his prose, reveals a certain melancholy that has been referred to the Hebraic strain in him; he is likewise gifted with delicate descriptive powers and his muse may be realistic as well as romantic. Besides his poetry and his famous novel he left a prose work entitled *La Revolución radical en Antioquia*.

quín, through his sincerity, impresses with a sense of the religious idealism and the proud-gestured self-abnegation of his class.

“A novel of Latin American manners” is the sub-title of the book, and truly, if we do not permit that characterization too great flexibility, the work teems with scenes of the people in their various pursuits and pleasures. We view them in the homes, at the opera, at the race-track, in their offices, at the interminable banquets; we are present at their weddings, their burials; we follow them to church, visit their literary societies, and go with them where not else until the horrors of civil war burst forth.

And it is here that the book strikes a note that is as timely to-day as when it was written, and applicable to an entire world rather than a single nation. Patriot though he be, Marroquín sees nothing beautiful in war. Indeed, so clearly does he behold and portray the horrors of human conflict that from the standpoint — and I say it without the slightest consciousness of exaggeration — it merits comparison with the famous war descriptions of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Marroquín possesses a penetrating power of description, whether he treats of the rich tropical landscape or the foolish humans that blot the lavish pictures of nature with their own violent, yet so often needless, strife. Consider, in this connection, the powerful episode in the chapter “Alligators and Vultures”; as a bit of sheer, straightforward narrative-description and its effect upon the reader, it is an admirable piece of work.

The book is pervaded by a certain symbolism that evidently pleased the author. We meet with it at once in the sketches wherein Roberto has posed as the lone, dying soldier — thus encountering a forecast of his heroic death. We come upon it often in the frequent mention of the Castilian roses, — and it is to these roses that one of the most beautiful and effective chapters of the novel is dedicated. The entire tale is a vast symbol of a war-sick world crying “Peace, Peace!” through the mute mouths of sacrificed youth. And the author does not lack a certain sense of humor that helps, now and again, to relieve the somber details of a war-swept landscape.

*Pax* is not so strong in characterization as in description. Either the author inclines to caricature (cf. such figures as

Karlonoff, Montellano, the poet Mata, the inventor Peñanegra, the revolutionist Landáburu) or to idealization (Dr. Miranda, Sister San Logorio, Roberto, Alejandro). Yet more than one personage is drawn in living colors, and the general impression is one of movement, animation, realism.

The book's literary satire, though it may be enjoyed in the spirit of caricature, is not to be taken too seriously. The effervescence of certain distinctly minor symbolists and "modernists" in Spanish American poetry (as in the poetry of the rest of the world) is its own best parody. The long travesty in Chapter VIII, particularly toward the end, shows the poem to be a take-off on the famous third Nocturne of José Anunciación Silva \* (1865-1896) beginning

Una noche,  
Una, noche todo llena de murmullos, de perfumes, y de musicas de alas;  
Una noche,  
En que ardian en la sombra nupcial y húmeda las luciérnagas fantásticas. . . .

(On one night, on one night permeated with murmurs, perfumes and the music of wings; on a night in which the fantastic glow-worms gleamed in the moist and nuptial shadows. . . .)

If the figure of Mata was meant as a caricature of Silva, however, it does the great Colombian poet injustice. Silva was undoubtedly a neurotic Baudelairian figure but he was just as undoubtedly a great poet,—one of the chief singers of modern Spanish America.

It is of passing interest that, though Marroquín was a corresponding member of the Royal Spanish Academy, his novel abounds in careless and incorrect passages; in fact, an enterprising purist (for is not Colombia the home of the great philologist Cuervo?) wrote a *Grammatical Analysis of Pax!* Yet, as Cuervo himself has shown in his intellectual contest with Valera,† Spanish is destined to be modified in Spanish Amer-

\* For studies of Silva's work the following sources are easily available: Antonio Gómez Restrepo: *La Literatura Colombiana*, Revue Hispanique, XLIII, 103, pp. 184-185.

Alfred Coester: *The Literary History of Spanish-America*, pp. 455-457.

Isaac Goldberg: *Studies in Spanish-American Literature*, pp. 57-64.

† See *El Filólogo Cuervo* in Francisco García Calderón's *Ideas e Impresiones*, pp. 215-222. [Editorial América.] Rufino José Cuervo (1842-1911) was called by Menéndez y Pelayo the greatest Spanish philologist of the nineteenth century.

ica in somewhat the same fashion that Latin was in the country where the Romance languages arose,—a phenomenon analogous to the evolution of English in the United States.\* Grammar has but an adventitious connection with good literature; it follows, and by no means leads, art. If linguistic evolution teaches anything, it teaches that purists are human signs that change is taking place, and that purists are too extreme in their static attitude. So, too, have Blasco Ibáñez and Pérez Galdós been attacked in Spain by the purists, and Dreiser in America. But how many expert grammarians can write *Cañas y Barro*, a *Marianela*, or a *Sister Carrie*?

As a collaborator in the writing of *Pax*, the author names José María Rivas Groot. The latter, in the history of Colombian letters by Antonio Gómez Restrepo, already referred to is indicated as a poet of few verses, characterized by a pure Christian idealism, and as a delicate chiseler of elegant, aristocratic prose in the manner of the modern French Christian school.

The growing public of North America that is interested in Spanish American culture,—that has read *Martin Rivas*, by the Chilean, Alberto Blest Gana, and *Amalia*, by the Argentine José Marmol, for example, should find a place on its shelves for Marroquín's *Pax*. To be sure, *Pax* considers the revolutionary spirit from a different angle; it is essentially aristocratic in tone, but it is none the less an important document and the other side (whichever side it may be) should always be heard. *Pax*, writes Antonio Gómez Restrepo, is a "representative, national work revelatory of great gifts." In its opposition to needless war it speaks not only for Colombia, but for all America,—for all the world.

ISAAC GOLDBERG.

Roxbury, Mass.,  
March, 1920.

\* Cf. *The American Language*, by Henry L. Mencken. New York 1919.

# PAX

## CHAPTER I

### SKETCHES

"EXCELLENT partridges!" exclaimed General Ronderos with that smile which made him look younger than he really was.

He wiped his lips, raised his glass, looked at it against the light and drank it with pleasure. It was a tepid Burgundy that permeated with its aroma the comfortable and refined atmosphere of the room.

The tapestries, the curtains, the sideboards focussed on the table the light, which was broken in the prisms of the chandeliers, sparkled in the glasses and shone on the snow white table cloth. On the center of the table, forming a harmony of white colors, rose a bouquet of Castilian roses.

"Excellent!" repeated Roberto. "They deserve to go down into history, like the falcon of the tale . . . the only falcon that was ever served with sauce . . ."

The ladies looked at Roberto with a mixture of surprise and curiosity. After a brief silence, during which one could hear the knives and forks striking the plates, he continued:

"A poor nobleman, a great hunter and great lover, possessed as his only fortune a falcon who was his pride . . . his Providence!"

"Something like the crow of the abbot St. Anthony?" interrupted Doña Teresa, whose eyes sparkled with irrepressible merriment.

"That's it; but instead of bread, he carried him pigeons from the neighborhood. The falcon was what he loved best . . . barring a certain lady who lived in a neighboring castle. . . . Her name?" Roberto glanced at those present. "I don't remember it. . . . Let us give her a poetic name, like Doña Sol, Violante,

Inés . . . ,” and he turned towards Inés, his cousin, who was listening to the story intently.

Opposite the young woman sat Count Hugo Dax-Bellegarde, in whose honor the dinner was being given.

“The beautiful lady of the castle . . . let us call her Inés . . . admired this falcon of brilliant plumage and steely bill. She watched him with delight darting through the air, describing wide circles, taking his bearings away on high, and with astounding dexterity, with regal majesty, which I can not describe, but which you can imagine at your own pleasure, pouncing on its prey, seizing it with its talons and bringing it to his master . . .”

From time to time, a petal, detaching itself from the bouquet of roses, described a semicircle, floated in the warm air, fluttered and fell softly.

“One fine morning, a morning of blue and gold, like the mornings of all stories, he discovers, with a mixture of happiness and anguish, that the lady, followed by her pages and retainers, arrives at his castle, alights from her pony and ascends the steps leading to the main door.

“‘My lord marquis, I have invited myself to dine in your company to-day . . .’ He trembles with pleasure, as well as with fear . . . To dine? . . . That day the falcon had not hunted anything . . . and there was not a turkey or even a chicken in the henyard . . . ah! . . . yes . . . a brilliant idea! . . . and shaking with emotion, he gives his cook a secret order . . . There was a long interval . . . Their appetites increased . . . They sat at the table . . . During the dinner, Doña Inés praised to the sky a magnificent bird which was served to her in an excellent sauce . . . although it was not half so good as this one . . . ‘Excellent partridge!’ she exclaimed . . . even as General Ronderos did just now . . . and at dessert, Doña Inés, with an irresistible smile, asked a favor . . .

“‘A favor? . . . my own blood . . . my own life’ . . .

“‘Not quite so much as that, marquis . . . Your falcon . . . Your falcon is what I desire . . .’

“‘My falcon! . . .’

“‘Yes, your falcon . . . It is a woman’s whim . . . I am in love with him . . . He is my only fancy . . . Do you deny it to me? . . . Do you really? . . .’

“‘ Ah! . . . It is impossible to comply with your request!’ . . .

“‘ Impossible? . . .’

“‘ Yes, milady . . . Impossible!’ . . . exclaimed the marquis.

“‘ Why?’

“‘ Excuse me . . . the falcon . . . we have eaten it!’ ”

The merry comments of the guests, dominated by the sonorous voice of Doctor Miranda, filled the dining-room.

“ All right,” said General Ronderos, “ what is the end of the story? . . . Ah! yes,” he added, addressing the two cousins and looking at them steadily, “ I can guess it. . . . It ended in a marriage, like all stories. . . .”

The old general’s joke made everybody smile maliciously. There followed a short interval of silence. Inés, slightly blushing, pretended to be unconcerned by pulling some petals from the roses. The general was asking himself if he had been guilty of some indiscretion when, suddenly, he realized the peculiar position of some of those present. There flashed through his mind the old love of Inés and Roberto, the tacit consent of both mothers, the probable marriage, which had been delayed because of the young man’s meager fortune, the struggles of the latter and of Doña Ana in order to keep up their social position and save the remains of their former wealth. . . . He saw in Count Bellegarde — the man of the gigantic enterprises and untiring energy, whom Inés was watching with increasing interest — a possible rival of Roberto. . . . Yes, and that word, *marriage*, which he had spoken thoughtlessly, seemed to have raised a problem in that family. . . . Who would be the victor?

The steel blue eyes of the count, which gave him a glacial expression, lit up, like a lightning flash, when they contemplated Inés’ sweet and serene face, and they resumed their icy expression when they saw at her side Roberto who, nervous and supple both of mind and body, radiated happiness and endeavored to make the guests merry with his talk and to draw from a habitual gloom his own mother, whose white hair and long transparent hands shone against her black dress.

Inés, wishing to break the silence and to draw the general attention to some other topic, said in her musical voice:



"The legend, I believe, has served as a theme for a drama. Isn't that right, Roberto? At least, that's what I think. . . . Now we'll find out. . . ."

"Yes, yes," observed Bellegarde, coming to Inés' assistance. "It is a drama by Tennyson."

"To which I prefer my own story in plain Bogotá prose," added Roberto.

Bellegarde frowned imperceptibly; his eyelids twinkled and he at once resumed his impassive and ceremonious air.

The servants drew near, and thrusting their heads between the guests, asked discreetly: "Chateau Lafitte? . . ."

They filled the cups with the red wine. On the snow white table cloth, the ruby shadows crossed the amethyst of the white wines.

The roast was brought in.

Bellegarde, who was on the right of the mistress of the house, Doña Teresa, indicated, with a respectful gesture, that the lady should help herself first.

"Do you think, Count," asked Roberto, "that it is purely gallantry or merely an old tradition that makes us serve the ladies before we serve the men?"

The count remained silent, removed his monocle, and with a forced smile of benevolent expectation, looked at Roberto.

"What can it be but a chivalrous custom, like so many others of French origin?" asked Doctor Miranda.

"Look up your Genesis, Sebastian, and you will find that that custom comes from the Garden of Eden."

"From the Garden of Eden?"

"Yes, Eve helped herself first."

While carving the roast, Doña Teresa noticed that it was somewhat tough. She shook her head with a gesture of displeasure, smiled halfheartedly and excused herself, saying:

"I am very sorry, it is not at all tender." . . .

"Never mind, Aunt," said Roberto. "In that respect, it resembles Inés: It has no heart."

Among those present, the figure of Doctor Miranda was most prominent. He was shaking his ascetic head negatively at Doña Ana and Doña Teresa, with whom he kept up a heated conversation. Yes . . . yes. . . . It was evident that they were reproaching him with his shyness in the matter of speak-

ing from the pulpit. He never let any one know when he was going to preach. This was unpardonable! Especially with the members of his own family. And then, he chose the humbler and more distant churches. But the public guessed when he was going to preach, and they flocked to the temple and filled it. . . . Still, there was not enough room for all those who should profit by his profound, moving periods. . . . Ah! he should mend his ways in future.

Doctor Miranda addressed Roberto in his sonorous voice.

"Isn't the last number of *La Ilustración Santaferña* a great one?" he asked.

"But it is somewhat late," interrupted the general. "We are in the first days of January and the number just out corresponds to last June."

"Which means that our subscribers are six months younger than those who are not on our list. You ought to be thankful to me, for I have given you the elixir of Youth."

"And very fine reading, too, which I recommend to all my daughters of confession. . . . Your study of Santa Fe customs, your colonial sketches, are masterpieces. I have personally attended those homely gatherings of our grandfathers where, between sip and sip of chocolate, the chronicles of the city were commented on, the newspapers were read, the news from Spain was discussed and inoffensive jokes, in perfect good taste, were enjoyed more than the chocolate. You have faithfully portrayed that society,—a society capable of the greatest deeds, able to fill the highest positions and whose lives glided along in the greatest peacefulness, in the grace of God, without bitteresses, without ambitions, without jealousies, without any desires, except that of dying a Christian death."

And while he spoke, his broad expressive gestures gave his words greater force, a special energy. His voice, trained in the pulpit, possessed rich and varied inflections and it was warming up with the heat of his own ideas.

"Señor Bellegarde," he continued, "you, as a tourist, probably will wish to know the Santa Fe society of a hundred years ago, so different from our own, which has lost its personality, its own character. I strongly advise you to read Roberto's articles." And then, addressing the latter, he said: "I thank you most cordially. You have given me the greatest frights

with your bull-fights; I have taken part in the excursions to Aserrio and Guarruz de Fucha; you filled me with devotion and enchantment in your Corpus procession; I have prayed in your mangers the Novena of the Child, and I have danced afterwards. . . . Are you laughing, Teresa? I have danced the *sampianito* and the *bolero* to the accompaniment of the guitar; I have smacked my lips with pleasure at the meat cakes and doughnuts after the dinner."

Bellegarde, who had become interested in the figure of the priest, paid now still more attention to him.

The appearance of Doctor Miranda was of those that reveal superiority and are rendered attractive by this same superiority because there is no attempt at domineering over other people. His bearing was stately and unconsciously majestic; his eyes piercing and full of life; his forehead bony and meditative. A few white hairs at his temples, the paleness of his complexion, the marks of penitence, meditation and intellectual toil, formed a contrast with the immaculate whiteness of his skin and the moist glitter of his pupils. The habit of solemn and benevolent thoughts, the internal peacefulness of a stainless life, the love for his fellowbeings, the joy of an ineffable hope were reflected in his smile, appeared in his graceful gestures and marked his whole personality with an indelible seal.

"Our ancestors," continued Doctor Miranda after a brief pause, "managed to be happy, in spite of the fact that they did not know Wagner, or Nietzsche, or Zarathustra. . . ."

"Or Tennyson's dramas," added Roberto.

Bellegarde, trying to please Inés, observed:

"I don't think that all of Tennyson's dramas are good. I confess that in the poet's garden, frozen by the wintry snows, the flowers were not blooming when he wrote his dramas. . . . I owe him a debt of gratitude because he charmed me, he profoundly moved me with his *Becket*. . . . There is where we can judge him, especially when Irving, the great tragedian, produces the play."

"Ah! . . . then it is Irving who achieves the success."

"He could not do anything without such a magnificent theme, without the transformation of the man of the world, the sinner, into the saint, the martyr that the author has portrayed. . . . I fancy I can see him now in the last act, wearing his

miter, wounded, dying on the steps of the altar, while the low chant of the monks reaches one mixed with the shouts of the mob and the rumbles of the thunder that shakes the huge basilica to its very foundations."

Bellegarde spoke slowly, in a monotonous tone, with a slight French accent, searching for the proper words, but his Spanish was correct and pure.

General Ronderos complimented him on his perfect command of the Spanish language, and Bellegarde replied that it was not to be wondered at, for his mother was Spanish and he was an admirer of the tongue and literature of Castile.

"Did you see Irving in *Charles I*?" asked Roberto wishing to give him a subject for conversation in which he seemed to be perfectly at home.

"Of course!" exclaimed Bellegarde eagerly, moved by the remembrance. "I saw him. . . . Ah! it is fifteen years ago. . . . A long time, isn't it? . . . *Charles I* was Irving's great battle. It was his Marengo. He became so absorbed in his rôle, that one might have thought Van Dyck's great picture had come to life. I remember the august, cold and melancholy attitude (and Bellegarde turned instinctively to Doña Ana); I remember the haughty and glacial look, the bitter smile, the pale forehead crossed by blue veins, in which one could see the mark of a tragic predestination."

And as he spoke, he observed the two ladies, trying to divine their souls, to reconstruct their whole lives from their faces. They seemed to be of the same age. But what a difference there was between them! One of them, Doña Ana, with her white head and the vague melancholy tint in her eyes, revealed a life of bitterness and sorrowful resignation. The other one, Doña Teresa, with the lively joy which sparkled in her pupils, with her full rosy cheeks, reflected wellbeing and a life of ease. . . . And then, what a contrast between their children, who were opposite Bellegarde! The melancholy of Doña Ana had given forth the jocularly of Roberto; the exuberant vivacity of Doña Teresa, the reserve of Inés.

Bellegarde was gradually arousing in Inés a sentiment opposite to the one she had entertained when she met him for the first time a few days previously. At first, his cold impassible appearance had been repulsive, but now a new man

was emerging before her. Through the thick veil that seemed to cover his mind, in spite of his efforts to watch and control himself, there shone a ray of light, a spark of fire which revealed him as an ardent lover of art.

When the dinner ended, they went to the drawingroom. As they passed through the gallery, the Count observed the old portraits and the alabaster vases that adorned it. In the drawingroom, he noticed the perfect style, *premier empire*, in which the yellow designs of the silk hangings and the gilt of the furniture, picture frames and chandeliers harmonized with the general tone of the room, with all those gradations of green which in a delightful cadence, like in a musical chord, descended from the brilliant green of an emerald to the opaque tint of dry leaves and the deepest dark-green of the waters of a pool.

Doña Teresa and Doña Ana withdrew to the neighboring room, the music salon.

"Ana, I have noticed that you are sad, . . ." said Doña Teresa, affectionately. "I have watched you a good deal. I know you had to sell our old family mansion. . . . Such a comfortable house. . . . Whom did you sell it to?"

"To a stranger who will arrive here in a few days. I am very sorry, especially on account of Roberto."

"How is that? . . . He seems so happy to-night. . . ."

"The very days on which he is most worried are the ones on which he appears merrier and more loving. Look at him . . . there he is in the center of that group, making everybody laugh. . . . All the same, I am sure that at this very moment he is thinking that this week he must surrender the house to a stranger. . . . It is the remains of our fortune. . . . That house is so full of memories. I confess I have not had the courage to go there for weeks and weeks."

"Don't worry about Roberto. He has genius and can adapt himself to everything. . . . We all love him so much. . . . Besides, there is that project of Count Bellegarde. . . . Ah! . . . there is a great future for Roberto!"

In the center of the drawingroom, in a noisy group formed by General Ronderos, Count Bellegarde, Inés and Roberto, and of which the latter was the life and soul, they were chatting about everything,— the next opera season, with Rondinelli as *prima*

*donna* and Malatesta as tenor,— of the horse races organized for the benefit of the College Hospital by González Mogollón, — of the two newly launched reviews: *La Mujer Independiente*, edited by Doña Aura de Cardoso and *La Pagoda Nietzsche*, directed by the poet Solón Carlos Mata.

General Ronderos, at that time Secretary of War, was temporarily in charge of the Treasury, and Bellegarde, who had come to the country to develop some big enterprises, took him to a corner of the room where coffee had been served on a marble table. There, speaking in measured tones and with sober gestures, he explained to the interested Minister the wonders wrought through peace and the capital supplied by his company in other American countries.

His company specialized in colonizing virgin lands and canalizing rivers. He had executed important projects in the United States, Mexico and Argentina. Unfortunately, his stay in Colombia would have to be short, for his friends wished to canalize the Seine, so as to make Paris a sea port, and with this purpose in view, estimates and plans had already been submitted to the commission who were studying the project. In his opinion, Colombia was the richest and had the most brilliant future of all the South American countries. All they needed was peace, and her material progress, her wealth, her institutions would render her incomparable. Bellegarde was the representative of some great financiers, a powerful company, a business like group, "his group."

General Ronderos, whose lively face of mobile features and eyes that sparkled under the gray eyebrows, forming a strong contrast with the studied coldness of the Count, listened ecstatically to these progressive projects.

"In this country, crossed as it is by three mountain ranges," said Bellegarde, "railroads are far too expensive. . . . In order to reach your ports, you need to look for cheaper roads, and the best are those that Nature herself offers you: the waterways. You have that outlet to the sea, only it is primitive, wild, undisciplined. . . . You must tame it, domesticate it; you must confine the Magdalena river to its own bed and increase its flow by deepening its channel . . . and then you will have, my dear Minister, a great port at Honda, Port Ronderos; with ships like the *La Normandie* and *La Touraine* anchored

in it. . . ." And the Count continued to elucidate his ideas, displaying great knowledge of the subject, full of enthusiasm and faith which he communicated to the old general.

"Ah! Señor Bellegarde, we are going to do a great deal for this country. I want to see you and Roberto to-morrow without fail at the office of the Treasury. I have already given your plans to Doctor Karlonoff, consulting engineer to the Treasury."

Roberto approached them.

"Señor Avila: you are one of us. I thank you for the faith you have in our project and for the trust you have placed in me, taking shares as a founder of the company. . . . You will not be sorry for it. The enterprise will enrich both the country and the shareholders . . . if there is peace."

General Ronderos, twirling his mustache with enthusiasm, spoke encomiastically to Roberto of the contractor's knowledge, his intuition and the accuracy of his computations.

"Oh! that's nothing, my dear Minister; to find that the Magdalena is the most important means of communication in Colombia, is like Columbus' egg."

"Will you allow me to raise an objection, my dear Bellegarde?"

The Count thought that Roberto was going to object to his project; he took off his monocle, keeping it raised in his hand, and prepared to reply.

"Go ahead."

"I wished to remark . . . that there isn't such a thing as Columbus' egg."

Doctor Miranda and Inés had approached them. Bellegarde replaced his monocle and resumed his cold affability.

"Ah! Brunelleschi."

"How is that?" asked Inés.

"The *cicerone* who showed me around Florence told me all about it," said Roberto. "The only Italian I spoke was what they use in the operas, but my guide spoke so eagerly and with such gestures that I understood him perfectly. Santa Maria del Fiore, the cathedral at Florence, was not completed; it lacked the roof. A competition was established for the adoption of a covering. On the appointed day, the judges met to examine the different projects. Brunelleschi proposed that they

should build an egg-shaped cupola. The idea seemed impracticable; they thought him mad and threw him out of the hall, but he came back. 'Let us see, gentlemen: this is the shape of my cupola. Whoever manages to make this egg stand on end on this table, let him be chosen to finish the cathedral.' The architects took up the egg, examined it and burst out laughing. Brunelleschi then picked up the egg, dented it a little and left it standing vertically . . . but, of course, it stained the table cover."

"And that very cupola was the despair of Michelangelo," concluded Doctor Miranda. "When he was thinking about the dome of St. Peter he admired it without wishing to imitate it . . . and in his spite, he kept repeating: 'I do not wish to copy you, and I can't surpass you. . . . *Come te, non voglio; meglio di te, non posso.*'"

"But he ended by imitating it, and he was rewarded with all the glory due to originality. To-day nobody remembers Brunelleschi, and that's the reason why I took his part,—so that he may be given the credit of having, at least stained the cover of a table with the yoke of an egg . . . which is the fate of those who do not profit from their inventions, while others grow fat upon them," said Roberto. "This has been very aptly expressed in a single verse of *Cyrano de Bergerac* . . . *ma vie . . . ce fut d'être celui qui souffre — et qu'on oublie!*"

"And perhaps that's why they call you Bergerac," interrupted Doctor Miranda.

"Are you fond of music, Count?"

Roberto offered his arm to his cousin, led her to the piano and stood close to her.

Passing near a table, Inés left upon it a bouquet of Castile roses that she had been wearing in her corsage.

General Ronderos walked over to Doctor Miranda. Bellegarde, who was greatly displeased at the intimacy between the two cousins, stood up and in his inscrutable attitude, which at times revealed indifference and at times ennui, began to walk around the room, his monocle in his eye, bending over to look at some photographs or standing to examine some oil paintings. He stopped before two richly framed canvases of equal size. He let his monocle drop, took a step back and knit his brow. They did not displease him. Modern paintings, unsteady brush,



same hand, though the subjects were different; opposite tendencies. . . .

Yes, yes, they were by the same artist . . . and in the apparent contrast between the two canvases, there was the same idea, the same symbol, the same marked purpose. . . . Even viewing them from afar, taking them in with one look, the coloring indicated the intention of the artist. One was a picture of luminous warm tones; the other of cold somber tints. The atmosphere of the two pictures revealed the antithesis,— a tragic play of colors.

He approached one of the pictures and observed its details . . . The subject, treated with brilliant and transparent tints, was a race course. He looked at the other one; a gray landscape, a battlefield.

“Let us examine the details,” he said to himself as he moved close up to the pictures. “Surely this isn’t the hand of a master, but rather that of an amateur. . . . Faulty design, lack of training, little anatomic vigor . . . better idea than execution. . . . There is no relation between the idea and its development . . . perhaps they are not finished works but sketches . . . they are not bad; in spite of carelessness, there is depth of feeling in the coloring . . . brilliancy, frankness, energy . . . The Racecourse. A luminous sky that reflects its splendor on the flat stretch of turf . . . the track, the stands full of spectators. . . . It is an open air study, full of movement, faces brimming with anxiety, groups of people, and here and there, brightening up the whole, touches of red, blue and yellow in the pennants, in the parasols, in the dresses, in the jockeys’ jackets. This landscape, this crowd, this movement, enveloped in a warm atmosphere, in a splendor of amber that caresses and transfigures everything. . . . The other one? . . . The gray landscape. . . . A uniform, monotonous, almost unpleasant daub with mysterious intensities in its shadows. From the milky sky descends the light on a desert of great black undulations. Towards the back, amid the fog, reddish flashes that suggest a battle . . . away in the background. . . . Here, in the foreground, an officer lies on the ground alone, abandoned near a dead fire. The thread of smoke that rises near the dying officer gives the picture an air of heartrending desolation. The ensemble causes an intense, deep feeling. The idea of the

artist is revealed in the canvas with melancholy grandeur."

The music continued. To the right, Roberto, with his hand on the music and his eyes fixed on Inés, watched for the moment in which Inés, with a rapid smile and an inclination of her head, should signal to him to turn over the leaf. Bellegarde left the pictures and walked over to the piano. He saw the couple, the smile. . . The eternal idyl of the cousins . . . a sure marriage. . . But no, let us not think about the music, let us go back to the pictures. . . Passing near the table, he stopped, lifted the bouquet, inhaled its fragrance, pulled a few roses . . . then returned to the canvases. "This jockey, here in the foreground, victoriously advancing on the black mare, in that cloud of luminous dust, has been studied with more care . . . One can guess, one can see the model. . . . And the same with the dying officer in the gray picture. . . . It is a fine spiritual face . . . yes. Is it the same model? I have seen that face somewhere. . . Where? Ah! yes, her cousin, always her cousin . . . Roberto!"

The music stopped. . . There was a brief applause.

Bellegarde, who was at one end of the drawingroom, started to cross it, in order to congratulate Inés, and Roberto, watching him, felt himself involuntarily attracted to the stranger, because his lordly feudal air was softened by a visage on which one could always read high and noble thoughts and because of his exquisite distinction. . .

There were complimentary phrases and excuses. . . "No . . . no . . . I really don't deserve so many compliments." There were comments on her interpretation, on Chopin, on Sonatas.

"I see," said Inés, "that you are a connoisseur, an artist, and that you have a special taste for music."

"Ah! señorita, allow me to give you an engineer's definition, — for I am one; music is a combination of two forces, two beautiful forces: the force of the mind and the force of sound."

"I disagree with you. . . That is not an engineer's definition; that is an artist's definition . . . and from a good artist, too. . . And you, how do you define music, Roberto?" asked Inés.

"Music is an exact expression of the indefinite. Another mathematical definition."

"You surely must be able to play the piano," insinuated the Count, and as Roberto answered in the negative, he continued: "Then, I am sure that you can sing, accompanied by Mademoiselle."

"Sing? You know, of course, that the song of an owl presages the death of a man. . . . If I were to sing, my voice would presage the death of the owls."

Bellegarde, who had gone back to observe the pictures, cast a questioning look about him.

"Ah! yes," exclaimed Doña Teresa, who had approached him. "You want to know who painted them? . . . A nephew of mine. . . . Alejandro. . . . He sent me them from Europe three months ago. If you only knew him! He can do everything; he travels, paints, writes . . . amuses himself. . . . An artist . . . Artist? no, not exactly . . . a passionate amateur, great heart, an intimate friend of Roberto. . . . You will meet him soon, for he arrives the day after to-morrow."

"A passionate amateur, yes," said Roberto. "A squanderer of sentiments, a searcher for emotions . . . a St. Augustine . . . in the first period. . . ."

"Ah! but that good heart," said Doctor Miranda, "will reach the second period, the second epoch through divine grace."

"Above all, he is a great friend," said Roberto.

"Yes," observed Doctor Miranda, "his is a generous friendship. Of his friendship it can't be said that it is like the barren figtree of the parable. . . ."

"What title have you given those sketches. . . . I beg your pardon, pictures?" asked Bellegarde.

"Ah! señor," said Doña Ana in a voice that was much younger than her face, "Roberto gave Alejandro the idea for these pictures and he caused me great grief by serving as model. . . . Just you imagine it,—model for a dead man. . . . I have even dreamt that I saw him in that desert. . . . Well, he, who had suggested the idea, wished to give them their titles and mentioned 'Light and Shadow'. . . . This business of the titles has started a polemic in the family. Everybody suggests different titles; Teresa, 'Day and Night,' Sebastian, 'Antithesis' . . . let us see, who else? . . . General Ronderos, 'Peace and War.' . . ."

"Inés has suggested," said Roberto, "the motto in our family coat-of-arms: 'Glory and Grief.'"

"Excellent, señorita," exclaimed the Count. "It expresses a great deal. *Bien trouvé!*"

"And you, Señor Bellegarde, what title would give them?" asked Inés.

After thinking for a moment, Bellegarde answered:

"I would look, not for two titles, not the antithesis, not the equilibrium between two ideas, but the expression of the artist's intimate thought, something that will embrace both pictures . . . both subjects. . . A sort of frame that could enclose both canvases, presenting them together as one whole . . . as the lesson, as the desire, as the feeling that those pictures awake in one; as a soul-cry coming from the artist himself and that re-echoes powerfully in the onlookers: the joys of peace, the horrors of war. . . I don't know. . . I can't find. . ."

And he took off his monocle and passed his hand over his brow.

"A telegram," said one of the servants.

"It is for me," said Roberto, "and it is from Alejandro!"

"From Alejandro?" asked several persons at the same time.

"Yes, he is coming . . . he is at Honda. Aunt Teresa, he sends his kind regards to you and Inés; a loving embrace for you, mother, and something else . . . what's this? . . . very bad news! look here, General Ronderos. . ."

And he handed the telegram to the General, who going over to a chandelier, took out his spectacles and read slowly until he suddenly frowned and crushed the paper in his hand.

"What is it?" they all asked.

The General returned the telegram and it passed from hand to hand. Alejandro announced that Floro Landáburu had returned from abroad, and that as he passed through the different cities, he was organizing committees and addressing political meetings.

"He is the eternal agitator," said Roberto to Bellegarde as an explanation of what was happening. "A worthless man, incapable of any good . . . but quite able to set everything on fire. . ."

A young soldier appeared in the drawingroom. He had a

wide scar on his forehead, and his manners and gestures indicated that discipline was uppermost in his thoughts.

"Hello, Borrero!" exclaimed Roberto, "what are you bringing us?"

The Colonel handed the Minister a telegram that read thus:

*"Secretary of War:*

*Arrive making propaganda towards peace.*

*F. Landáburu."*

General Ronderos exclaimed in a rough voice:

"It means war! . . ."

"This man," added Roberto addressing the Count, "will arrive at Bogotá, will found a paper and agitate the country. Meanwhile, Tubalcain Cardoso, another revolutionist, who was in the Cuban war and is now involved in a revolution in Central America, will come to invade us. . . They will find out pretty soon that Cardoso, with an army of adventurers, will penetrate into the Llanos."

All conversations ceased. A horrible thought killed all joy. Everybody, seized by fear, had the presentiment of a disaster.

Doña Ana, passing her trembling hand through her hair, cast a horrified glance at the gray landscape, the battle-field, the desert with the great black undulations where the officer, stretched on the ground, was dying, abandoned near the extinguished fire. . . The thread of smoke, rising by the side of the dying officer gave the picture an air of heartrending desolation.

"Ah! my good friend," said General Ronderos addressing the Count and restlessly pacing the room. "These rumors always come at the moments of greatest abandon and joy. The thunder of battles is constantly rumbling in our ears, and when the country begins to recover from its misfortunes, when the future smiles at us, alarms like this one," and here he shook the telegram violently, "come to shatter our hopes. In all Colombian homes, these alarms are lugubriously echoed. Upon the happiness of work, follow terror and anguish. The revolution advances silently; it is the lava that flows relentlessly in the dark, seeking an outlet, and sooner or later explodes through the crater."

Doctor Miranda, with a voice that filled the spacious drawingroom, exclaimed:

"*Vocem terroris audivimus, formido et non est pax.*" And fearing that the ladies had not understood, he translated: "Voices of terror reach us, fear reigns everywhere, there is no peace. *Non est pax.*"

"That's it!" exclaimed Bellegrade with a wide gesture. "That ought to be the title of those pictures: *Pax!*"

## CHAPTER II

### MUSIC AND POLITICS

GENERAL RONDEROS interrupted his walk, and standing in the middle of the drawingroom, said:

"I will maintain peace at all costs!"

The light of a chandelier, striking him full, brought out the lineaments of his energetic visage. The strong features, the wide bronzed forehead, the bushy eyebrows, the mustache trimmed over the lip, the protruding jaw, everything in that face indicated a dominating soul, predestined to struggle and command.

"I'll vouch for it," said Roberto, "but as long as you hold office, you will see how they start a campaign to oust you, and then there will be war."

"Is that possible?" asked Bellegarde. "This country is so unfortunate and so rich! It needs only peace. Surely all its inhabitants, understanding their own interest, will work against civil war, which brings only ruin and death."

On hearing the last word, Doña Ana shivered and instinctively turned to look at the picture in which Roberto had been portrayed dying in the gloomy desert.

"In these countries, my friend Bellegarde," said Roberto, "in these American countries, there are elements interested in peace and elements interested in War. . . . It is a queer thing! Here war is the field of the weak, of those who have been vanquished by life. Peace is the field of the strong, who through their genius, their work and their perseverance obtain a position, a fortune, a name. . . . And it is very queer also that de-

feated revolutions strengthen, rather than weaken governments against which they are started."

"Is that true? We, in Europe, will never be able to understand these American countries."

In order to change the disagreeable subject, Roberto opened a copy of *La Mujer Independiente*.

"My friend Bellegarde, this is a review edited by Doña Aura del Campo de Cardoso. . . The very wife of Tubalcain Cardoso, the famous revolutionist. . . Do you wish me to read something? 'Contents: Woman in XXI century; Feminism advances; Psychological monograph by Policarpa Salabarrieta; A solution through divorce; The mix-up of a Death, or The Accursed Gypsy, by A. del C. de C.'"

Roberto closed the magazine, stood thinking for a minute, and then burst into a peal of laughter.

"I understand it now; that novel is a vengeance. Yes, sir. A few days ago I met Doña Aura at the Aguanueva, accompanied by some girls. . . You know that she has stuck at twenty five years of age. I learned afterwards that they were in search of a gypsy, a real or a fictitious one, who could tell fortunes and who, as a proof of the accuracy of her forecasts, used to guess some happening in the life of her customers . . . for example, the age. Doña Aura made pitiless fun of the gypsy, but her companions forced her to stretch out her hand, so that she could examine the cabalistic signs and wrinkles. The gypsy seized the hand, but instead of examining it, looked at the face of the poetess. 'In order to find out your age,' said the gypsy, 'I don't need to look at the wrinkles in your hand. It is enough to look at those in your face.'"

Roberto opened the magazine again.

"Here are the works of Tubalcain, the editress' own husband. Shall I read? 'Political pamphlets of General Cardoso,' for sale at the office of *La Mujer Independiente*. 'My diary of the campaign in Cuba, by General T. C.'—'The great General Ezeta, Saviour of San Salvador, by T. C.'—'My banishment from Central America, decreed by the Jaguar-Panther Ezeta, by T. C.'—'The truth about the battle of Tazeltenango, the narrative of an international revolutionist, by T. C.'—'My escape along the Orinoco. Fifteen days among the Gohajiva tribes, by General T. C.'"

"How is that? . . . there are two contradictory pamphlets there about Ezeta," said Doctor Miranda, stretching his hand towards the magazine.

"Those two pamphlets are a whole history. It is very curious how Cardoso became acquainted with the Dictator Ezeta," said Roberto.

"How did that happen?" asked Doña Teresa. "It must be rather amusing."

"When Cardoso, after having been defeated, left Colombia, fleeing along the Orinoco, he first became acquainted with the Gohajiva Indians and then sought Ezeta's friendship in Salvador. Ezeta, very suspicious, refused to see him, but Cardoso, through the Dictator's private secretary, had two pamphlets given to Ezeta. They were two entirely opposite biographies; in one of them, he lauded his dictatorship to the very skies; in the other, with accurate data obtained among the conspirators, he painted the Dictator as a monster. One was entitled: 'Biography of the great General Ezeta, Savior of Salvador,' and the other: 'Ezeta, the Jaguar-Panther of Central America'. . . The Dictator was to choose and buy one of the Manuscripts. . . Ezeta selected the apotheosis, and sent Cardoso ten thousand dollars. . . . A little afterwards, and in spite of the praises he had written, the 'international revolutionist' joined in a conspiracy against Ezeta, was discovered, sentenced to death, and he finally managed to escape from Salvador disguised as a monk. . ."

"And where is he now?" asked Doña Ana with grave concern. "Is he going to start a revolution?"

"He left Mexico and we have lost track of him," answered General Ronderos.

"And are these men, who flatter and sell their pen to foreign petty tyrants, the ones that are coming to Colombia to start revolutions in the name of Freedom?" asked Doctor Miranda.

"Here is another copy," said Roberto, in order to change again a subject that was leading them back to the idea of a civil war. "Listen, mother, listen, Aunt Teresa . . . this is the great review of the poet Mata: *La Pagoda de Nietzsche*. . . Shall I read? . . . Prose or Poetry? Inés, you choose. . . All right, let it be poetry. Now, listen:



## EGYPTIAN NOSTALGIA

*(From the Volume, Eternal Orient)*

"In the grayish triumph of evanescent colors,  
 When issues forth the apotheosis of half tints,  
 I wish that the song of my lyre cease  
 Beside the imperturbable Sphinx that gazes, gazes, gazes.  
 And in the fiery sandy desert, that feigns a white dream,  
 To be the eternal sweetheart of the silent Sphinx.  
 There where the sun, burnishing its necromantic gold  
 Scatters the scarlet of its red hemorrhage,  
 Where the camels raise their long and crooked neck,  
 Like question marks in a great bitter poem;  
 And where the giraffes raise their straight necks,  
 Like exclamation marks in a perfect distych;  
 In the land of the lotus, where sleeps Rameses,  
 Where the river of Mud the bristling crops  
 Waters, and where its slime scatters through the delta,  
 With the ochers and yellows of its magical gamut;  
 There, where the palms spread their fans  
 And the sacred Ibis polishes its red bill.  
 To die where the palms lose themselves in the distance  
 Feigning, in the oasis, the agony of Greenness;  
 To die in an orgy, in an impure banquet,  
 Like those in which the hand writes upon the wall,  
 And at the clinking of the glasses and at the sound of my songs  
 To laugh agonizingly the Mane-Thekel Phares,  
 There, amid the euphonic green and the iniquitous yellow,  
 That the Sphinx perceives with her oblique looks,  
 Where the bald Triumvir, leaving Rome tra-  
 versed the seas to obtain from Cleopatra  
 The charming aspic of her ardent kisses,  
 Offered in lips of myrrhic stars."

"Stop! stop! no more verses of that kind. No more decadent verses!" shouted Doña Teresa, and all joined in noisy protest.

"No more verses? All right! Here goes some prose of the same brand, but without any guarantee of good taste. It is entitled: 'The Evangel of the Blasphemer,' signed by S. C. Mata. Listen: 'The Superman was traveling in a desert land without sun or trees. His shadow did not follow him. He followed his shadow. He was crossing a bloody chaos. He arrived at the gates of a city, the city of men, more monkeyish than the very monkeys themselves. And the Superman said: "I bring you the good news. I have killed the supratherrestrial; I have slain love; I have killed the soul."'"

"No, no, my son!" exclaimed Doña Ana. "Don't read that. . . How fearfully nonsensical!"

"Never mind," said Doña Teresa. "It is highly amusing."

"Pay no attention to those mendacious hermits who speak to you of the supraterrrestrial, of the soul, of love. There is only one sovereign power; the power of genius; there is only one love: the Dionysiac love."

"Enough! That's enough!"

But Roberto, who knew that the refutation of Nietzscheism supplied an inexhaustible theme to Doctor Miranda, continued unshakably in his reading, giving the Doctor a sly look.

"There is only one God: the Superman. Don't you see the corpses of the three great Dead? Does not the stench of the divine things that are rotting sicken you? Break the thongs of the Despotism. Belong not to duty but to will. Do not imitate the humpy camel that obeys and drinks the dirty water of the cisterns and says: "I must." Rather imitate the stubborn donkey that resists his master and goes his way saying: "I will." Rise, search the zenith of will. Rejoice: I bring you the glad tidings: there are no longer any sinners, for I have slain Virtue. There are no deceivers any longer, for I have killed Truth."

"Above Good and Evil, above Truth and Falsehood, above those great Dead ones, there is nothing but the Superhuman Ego!"

Doctor Miranda gradually turned his head towards Roberto. He listened intently to the strident phrases, stopped smiling and with a nervous movement turned in his fingers his snuff box, which flashed in the light. When Roberto finished reading, Doctor Miranda exclaimed:

"It should not be allowed; it is unpardonable that such things should be published! These nonsensicalities, Señor Bellegarde, seem the concoctions of madmen, yet some people are trying to form a school with them."

"Ah! in France we have the same things," said Bellegarde, "there we have Verlaine. . ."

"The Blasphemer's Evangel! . . . isn't that what it says? . . . What does Mata know about evangels or God . . . or even of German or about Nietzsche? Excuse me if I become a little excited. I can't stand this native Nietzschean school,

these decadent clownish imitators of an author they do not themselves understand. For they belong to those very people of whom Nietzsche says that 'they know little and do not learn well'. . . Nietzsche was, at least a sincere man, though led astray by pride. He had the style of grandiose music, something like a reminiscence of his former master, Wagner. When Nietzsche abandoned his master, he tore a magnificent piece from Wagner's cloak."

He took up the magazine, raised it to his eyes, then threw it on the table disdainfully, and as if forgetting himself in the vehemence of his thoughts: "A great deal of evil," he said with a forceful motion of his neck and head, "a great deal of evil is caused by these things. . . Though ill parodied by our decadents, at bottom, Nietzsche's ideas are disastrous. . . Anarchism . . . Atheism. . . . We all think thus: 'Since I have a soul, and since there are innumerable souls, there must be an infinite fountain of love and wisdom whence we come and whither we shall return.' But Nietzsche says: 'If there were a God, how could I tolerate not being God myself? I, therefore, declare that He does not exist.' You can see that that is the paroxysm of atheist pride."

Doctor Miranda, who was always aroused from his habitual moderation by the subject of Nietzsche and decadentism, paced about the room, took some snuff, approached the table and took up the magazine.

"But I make a distinction," he said, letting go the magazine again. "I make a distinction between Nietzsche and our Nietzscheists . . . the latter have never entertained a philosophic thought, nor even a serious thought; they simply admire an idol they do not know. . . . They seek popularity, advertising, and found pagodas merely to let the public know it. Ah! Nietzsche was something different. Amidst all his horrors and all his pride, he at least had the quality of that satanic defect: contempt for popularity. He managed to isolate himself, disdained applause, knew the intoxication of solitude and drank of its bitterness to the very dregs, even to madness. . . . These Nietzscheists inspire us . . . allow me to say this among ourselves . . . inspire us with contempt, while Nietzsche inspires us with certain surprise mingled with compassion, that compassion we feel for magnanimous characters and for overwhelm-

ing misfortunes. . . Our pagodaists have neither intelligence nor artistic form, whereas the madness of the German atheist is the madness of an artist; it has a certain tragic and somber beauty which endows him with the splendor of a symbol and the value of an example. His life was a philosophic tragedy in which he was at the same time hero, hangman and victim; a drama in which thoughts are transformed into characters, and at times into specters and which one might call the drama of pride, the tragedy of a mystic atheist. . .”

“Granted,” said Roberto, “but . . .” he added, in order to bring forth the ardent protest of the priest and to seek a topic for conversation pleasing to Bellegarde, “but there is one point on which you, yourself, agree with Nietzsche.”

“I?” asked Doctor Miranda with astonishment, and the index and the thumb with which he was taking snuff stood still while he waited for a reply.

“Yes, you . . . Nietzsche could not stand Wagner . . . and neither can you. . .”

“Is that true, Doctor?” asked Bellegarde. “I should like to have your own eloquence so as to be able to convert you to Wagner, for the music of the great master is the most idealistic, the one that speaks best to the mind. He was always pre-occupied with deep moral questions, and his unshakable love for religious principles earned for him the terrible enmity of Nietzsche. A redemption is the motif of all his works. . .”

Bellegarde stopped, fearing to annoy the company with a tedious subject, but Doctor Miranda invited him with a gesture to continue, expressing the pleasure with which he was listening to his remarks.

“There is not one Wagnerian opera where someone is not redeemed. . . In *Parsifal* and in the *Meistersingers* it is a young man; in *Tannhäuser* a sinner, and *The Flying Dutchman*, the wandering Jew. . .”

Inés attentively followed Bellegrade’s words, and at times he seemed to be speaking only to her.

“I admire in Wagner,” he continued, “the revolutionist.” And turning to Doña smiling, he added: “The international revolutionist, like Cardoso.”

“Oh! my dear sir!” she exclaimed tones, “don’t admire any revolutionists.”

"I admire the revolutionists in art, when they triumph. . ."

"And what was his revolution about?" asked the priest.

"To a philosopher, to a thinker like you, the explanation must be simple, and that's why I think it an easy matter to convert you. Wagner was, above all, a thinker, a philosopher. The Revolution? . . ." Bellegarde looked up at the ceiling and then continued: "He managed to embody in the living form of a lyric drama, the most profound, the most abstract thoughts. All his works are dominated by the conception of a philosopher."

The priest meditated, concentrating his thoughts. Inés said:

"To be frank . . . I don't understand you."

"Wagner managed to bring about a happy union," continued Bellegarde, "a marriage of convenience and of love, between two sweethearts who had been seeking each other for a long time; the marriage of Drama and Music."

"A well matched pair," said Roberto. "Both beautiful, both of royal blood. . . I understand that the master also effected a revolution in the orchestra itself," he added, in order to encourage Bellegarde.

"Oh! he is a symphonic writer without a peer; he subordinated the human voice to the orchestra; he reserved for it eloquent phrases, passionate impetus, lyric expansion. No one, besides, knows as well as he does, the effects of each instrument. He knew which instruments strike our breast with a dull thud and which electrify our spinal marrow. . . At times, I listen to certain passages, it seems to me that the bows of the violins do not glide on the strings but on my very nerves." And he continued, addressing the ladies: "We will go to the première of the Opera Company, won't we? I see they are going to produce *Werther*, by Massenet, a composer who learned from Wagner the new rôle, the unwonted importance of the orchestra."

"All that may be so," interrupted Doctor Miranda, playing with his snuff box, "but I understand that Wagner wrote for artists only, and that his works cannot be understood by the common people, and I believe that works of art ought to be understood by all."

"That is precisely Wagner's own opinion. He maintains that a work of art must come from the people and go back to them. And, in order to convince you, Doctor, let me add

that Wagner was not only a musician, but a great poet, a Christian poet. The innovator who has shown greater respect, greater love for art . . . maintains with admirable valor, in these times of materialism and greed, that the firmer ground for man is the field of art, and that art alone makes life bearable. That is my own conception of life . . . and that is why I respect and admire in Wagner the apostle who, with the powerful elements of music, gave himself up to the redemption of man from material and vulgar interests, elevating him to the cult of the intellect, to that which the human mind holds as most delicate and greatest."

"All right, I go over to Wagner," said Doctor Miranda, pocketing his snuff box.

"You speak like an ardent admirer," said Inés. "You must know him thoroughly. I have not doubt you are able to interpret him."

Bellegarde arose without hesitation, while Roberto, showing him the piano, said:

"There is the wild beast, go and tame it."

"Of Wagner, I can't play a thing, señorita, nor can you judge him except in an orchestra; but I can play by heart some pieces by Beethoven, Wagner's real teacher," said Bellegarde.

Seated at the piano, with his strong and long hands stretched over the keyboard and his eyes looking up, Bellegarde struck a chord, then stopped and turned his head as if looking for Inés.

"Although I am a bad player and I am afraid of slandering Beethoven with a false interpretation, I am going to play the fourth symphony in B flat, just to please you. . . It is so beautiful. . . You must know the passionate motif of the *adagio*; the melody is a love song to the countess of Brunswick, *the immortal beloved*. At the same time that Beethoven revealed his love through his music, he wrote her a letter. We have, therefore, a double expression, in words and notes, of the same feeling of intense passion."

"It would be very curious," observed Roberto, "to compare Beethoven's prose with his music,—the love that speaks with the love that sings."

"The style is the man," said Bellegarde raising one hand from the keyboard and letting it fall on his knee. "The style

of his letters is uneven, broken up; but the other style, that of his music, is superior to life and reality. After the human words, Beethoven sounded a divine language. . . ."

He turned to the keyboard, and as if revealing his own feelings, he put his whole mind and soul into the musical phrases and began the piece. In the middle of it, as he was commencing the *adagio*, they heard outside the room a plaintive howl, and a while afterwards, there appeared at the door a big dog waving its tail and with eyes aflame.

"Be quiet, Maratón! Get out of here!" exclaimed Roberto very much annoyed; and then, softening his manner, and caressing the animal, he said in a low voice: "Are you suffering? . . . Do you like German music? Listen, but keep quiet. . . All right, go to your own place now, go back to the garden."

The dog, now calmed, crossed the gallery and descended the steps. Bellegarde, at Inés' suggestion, began anew the interrupted passage and as he again came to the *adagio* and to the same chord, they heard afar a heartrending howl from Maratón, who this time appeared in the room greatly excited, and without paying any attention to Roberto, stood howling at the door and turned round and round panting and growling with satisfaction or anger.

"Get out!" shouted Roberto trying to chase him away.

"Is he suffering?" asked Inés.

"Is he enjoying himself?" queried Doctor Miranda.

Doña Ana seemed sorry; Doña Teresa laughed.

A servant appeared, bringing two newspapers that had just arrived.

"It is *La Integridad!*" exclaimed Roberto, somewhat vexed. "Sánchez Méndez's newspaper. . ."

On hearing that name, General Ronderos, who had been talking with the ladies, became preoccupied and sad.

"Sánchez Méndez," he said "was my best friend ten years ago, and the worst enemy of the revolutionary party, who called him then the Great Inquisitor . . . and now he has joined them against me. His voice has all the prestige of great services rendered, of solid culture and of a brilliant pen; but spite has converted him into an agitator, a destroyer of his own work, a tool in the hands of Landáburu."

"There is something here where my name is mentioned," said Roberto, and he began to read *La Integridad*.

"The curtain is about to rise upon the last act in the comedy of the elections!

"The sleight-of-hand tricks and feats of jugglery will surpass all expectations! The absolutists, who can never be seen except in public offices and in the offices of contractors, will appear in an appalling majority over the two great political parties of the *integros* and the *revaluación*.

"We shall see, therefore, elected to office, through the imposition of political trickery, Roberto Avila and Alejandro Borja and others who have no reasonable claim save their abject submission to the powers that be, and whose only duty will be to defend or abet, at least, the exploiters of the Treasury. On the other hand, General Floro Landáburo, who has been nominated as a candidate for representative by republicans of many Departments, will be defeated.

"The enthusiastic receptions with which this illustrious citizen has met on his way through the different towns, are, above all, a protest against the vise-like machine that is squeezing the life out of our country.

"His candidacy honors the country, because General Landáburo has always fought against the abuses of the Executive, because he is not afraid of the liberty of his enemies, because he is a respector of property.

"Such will be the result of the struggle, in uneven ground, between the absolutists, whose kernel is the industrial element and whose only strength is the abuse of power, and the two great parties, united by a single aspiration and who form nine tenths of the population: the party of the *revaluación* and the party of the *integros*.

"Vain will the efforts of Minister Ronderos prove to bring us back to the Constitutional party, from which we are separated, by proclaiming a *union* . . . a mean word that does not signify a coalition for the furtherance of welfare, but a call for the formation of a gang of grafters.

"The only possible and logical union is that of the republicans supporting the antiabsolutist program inscribed in the standard of the *integros*. . ."



Doña Ana, who was carefully listening to the reading, expressed by her sorrowful attitude the displeasure which the attacks on General Ronderós, and especially those on her son, caused her.

Roberto noticed this; he stopped reading and opened another paper — a very small sheet — which also had an article marked on the margin with red pencil.

They all exclaimed with alarm:

“Ah! Is it *El Escorpión*? . . . no! no! . . . goodness sake! . . . don't read that! . . .”

“Just let me read this advertisement,” said Roberto.

### “WAR UPON THIEVES”

In order that the country may learn how some individuals filch the public treasury, we will receive all kinds of denunciations in our offices, from 3 to 4 p. m., every day except holidays. Strict secrecy guaranteed. Price: from \$50 to \$200, according to the importance of the denunciation.

“And this poem,” added Roberto, “which is against you, General Ronderos, is the explanation of the cartoon — which I cannot show to the ladies — and of why *El Escorpión* has been sent here:

“El padre Adán comió en cueros  
La manzana solamente;  
Si hubiera sido Ronderos  
Se traga hasta la serpiente.”

(Starknaked father Adam ate the apple only; if he had been Ronderos, he would have swallowed the serpent as well.)

## CHAPTER III

### THE CONSULTING ENGINEER

COUNT BELLEGARDE crossed the square and went over to the Treasury in order to keep the appointment which General Ronderos had made with him the previous night at Doña Teresa's house. He crossed the portico of the Government Palace where the afternoon sun shone brightly and passed through the row

of columns that cast their shadow on the pavement of polished bricks. Coming from the heated air of the square, he felt the cool atmosphere of the building as he started up the stairs. As he ascended, he saw people going up and down with sheaves of papers under their arms. Once in the upper floor, he heard through one of the windows the bells of the street cars, the hammering of the roadmenders breaking stones and the rumbling of carriages. He went over to the window and took a look at the city that stretched in front of him like a panorama. He saw the façade of the Cathedral, bathed in the sun, the needle of a pine tree, the roofs, the smoke of a chimney, and away in the distance, the green mass of the mountains and a stretch of blue firmament. His eyes, the experienced eyes of a traveler, could perceive certain traits that impart a certain physiognomy and character to things. He began to hunt for the office of the Treasury. Starting along a corridor through which blew an icy blast, he met several groups, clerks who went about without hats, as if they were in their own homes, with their hands in their pockets and their cigarettes in their mouths, policemen with notes and books, solicitants with an air of ennui and expectation. At the end of the corridor, an electric light that had been left lit, shone with ghastly pallor in the brightness of the afternoon. Bellegarde arrived at the end of the corridor and inquired:

"Where can I see the Minister?"

"Here, on the left."

He walked on, met another corridor, hesitated and repeated his question.

"There, at the end," answered an official who was carrying a despatch.

At the end of the corridor, behind a wooden railing, he saw an usher in his office: a table, a copying press and a dilapidated chair.

"May I see the Minister?"

"He won't receive any one just now, but you may speak to the undersecretary, Docton Alcón," answered the usher as he struggled with the lever of the press.

From the usher's office, one could see a series of chambers at the end of which was the Minister's office. Bellegarde crossed these chambers between rows of clerks bent over their

desks. He approached and questioned a young man who was deeply absorbed in the reading of a book. The young man looked at him with displeasure for a moment, then leaned over the book again to continue his reading. . . He was reading: "He had crossed the street and was turning round and round that still, dumb coupé of the Baronness, with its driver rigidly sitting on the box. . ."

Bellegarde dared to ask again: "May I see the under-secretary?"

"Walk in," answered the clerk, who bent his head down again and continued to read *L'Argent*, by Zola . . . "rigidly sitting on the box. A white hand lowered the window of the coupé; he saluted and gallantly approached the Baronness de Sandorff. 'Well, M. Saccard,' asked the Baronness, 'shall we play a game of. . .'"

"Is it in the next chamber?" asked Bellegarde.

The young man answered "Yes" with a single movement of his head, so as not to miss the dialogue between the banker Saccard and the Baronness de Sandorff.

In the next chamber, Bellegarde approached the table of an old clerk, Don Cosme Oramas, who lowered his head and looked at him smiling over his eyeglasses.

"May I see the Minister? He asked me to call on him at half past two."

"Come right in; I believe he is receiving visitors to-day," politely answered Don Cosme, with that smile he had bestowed for half a century upon the "intimates" who called on the Minister.

When Bellegarde walked away from him, the clerk exclaimed with alarm:

"Half past two? It is time for my milk!" and he went over to some shelves where, hidden by sheaves of documents, there was a cup surrounded by small sponge-cakes. Two employees, at neighboring tables, were deeply engrossed in their tasks; one of them was drawing on paper with the letter head of the Treasury a monogram of his own initials intertwined with those of his sweetheart; the other was neatly manicuring his nails with a penknife.

In the adjoining chamber, a green room with frescoes on the ceiling, sat Doctor Alcón bent over a map which he was con-

sulting at a table covered with books and surrounded by chairs loaded with papers.

The light filtered through two green damask curtains in a high window, shining in the varnish of the maps and in the molding of the shelves, and in one of the corners it illuminated with livid rays the bald head of Doctor Alcón.

The undersecretary drew close to his eyes the visiting card the Count handed him. With severe mien, he read: "Cte. DAX BELLEGARDE — Issy-sur Seine — B. Hausmann, 144.", then, relaxing his features, blushing with feigned humility, he stood up to greet the Count, coughed and pointed to a closed door.

"The Minister," he said, "has given me orders to show you in immediately. He has been busy all morning with a certain matter. Doctor Karlonoff, consulting engineer to the Treasury, is now conferring with him upon that same matter. They have been closeted for three solid hours. Please follow me."

He opened the door, pushed his head into the next room and drew back again.

"Doctor Karlonoff has just left by the other door. His Excellency is now alone. You may go in," . . . and bowing to the Count, he let him pass, returned to his desk and again bent his ivory bald patch over the papers on the desk.

Bellegarde, as he sat in front of him, found General Ronderos tired out, with an expression of exhaustion, as if crushed by some gigantic task. Doctor Karlonoff had been with him during three solid hours, explaining the difficulties and dangers in canalizing the Magdalena River. The Minister was disheartened, hesitating, sighing at times. He was dizzy with figures and names. He wished Bellegarde to restore to him his faith; he desired him to demonstrate to him that the project was feasible. The Count plunged directly into the matter. Although he had submitted his estimates and plans, he thought it proper to go fully into some details of the scheme that had brought him to Colombia; namely: the canalization and the colonization. He proposed to canalize the main artery of the country, the Magdalena, rendering it navigable to transatlantic steamers; to drain its banks and clear them of its immense forests; to cut and utilize the useful timber; to exploit the woods

of rubber trees; to colonize these immense regions. . . The "group" of financiers, "*his group*," the Franco-Belgian company, in view of the report submitted by their engineers, were willing to furnish the necessary capital and had all the machinery ready. In a few days, the enterprise would be placed on the Stock Exchanges of Paris and Brussels. "His group" was only waiting for a cable.

Very methodically, the Count divided his exposition into four parts. He first showed the disadvantages of the Magdalena in its present condition; then he made a scientific study of its canalization; afterwards he expounded the advantage of the enterprise, and, finally, he spoke of the requirements of his company, "*his group*."

"The Magdalena is a muddy river," he said, while General Ronderos, disheartened by Karlonoff, was gradually recovering his faith, "with sand in a state of suspension; one of the most crooked, capricious and undisciplined that I have studied in America. Sometimes sluggish and almost dry, other times violent and in full flood, it prevents navigation with its shifting sand bars or renders it dangerous with its rapid current. It is either too poor or too rich. Of earth and sand alone, it washes away more than six million cubic meters, according to the data I have obtained from my two assistant engineers. This prodigious mass of debris torn from its banks, flows towards the sea, is deposited at certain intervals and covers the bottom of the stream, shaping and reshaping, at each flood, the line of the stream, the *talweg*, the depth and the general character of the river. What characterizes the Magdalena is its enormous width. . . Mister Minister, kindly look at this drawing the accuracy of which I can guarantee absolutely . . . look at these recurring curves and at this series of islands which it forms in its course."

He put on his monocle, stooped over a map which he had spread on the table, pointed to several black dots along a blue curve and then, standing up again, he added:

"An island ought to be an exception in a well-trained river; but here, islands are the rule and the river, always divided into two or three arms, has a very small draught."

He stood up erect, and becoming somewhat heated, but always with his well trained and harmonious voice, he went fully into

an explanation of how the evil should be corrected and how the river could be rendered navigable to steamers of deep draught. He summarized what he had expounded in his two reports submitted to the Treasury; the scheme was not impracticable; on the contrary, he thought it quite easy provided the government supported "his group." The dredgers, far too slow, were not the principal factor. The whole system consisted, particularly, in utilizing the stream itself, narrowing it down by means of skew jetties and forcing it towards the center, where it would deepen its own bottom. The water, he went on, on narrowing down licks the bed of the stream, sweeps the banks, straightens the *talweg* and carries the sand to the ocean. Sometimes the sand, which was the cause of all the trouble, would come in very useful, for it could be employed in filling the marshes and swamps along the banks, thus raising them and converting them into fertile and healthy fields. Why did the Minister hesitate? Nothing was simpler, nothing more clear, nothing so easy; that was how "his group" had canalized the Mississippi and straightened the course of several rivers in Argentina. At any point, according to a map which they had there on a chair, and which had been drawn right on the spot, they could obtain a depth of seven meters, and that was enough for any sea-going steamer.

"The company, Mister Minister, does not require any pecuniary help of any kind or in any shape; we only ask for a short lease and for some tracts of idle land. The government will be a shareholder in the company, and as a guarantee that work will begin as soon as the contract is signed, I will deposit one million francs in the Treasury. I confidently expect that the job will be finished within five years. Really, Mister Minister, all we ask of the government is security and peace.

"I trust to the good sense of the country. The period of madness, the attempts at suicide have all passed. . . . The agitators, Landáburo, Sánchez Méndez . . . are already too impotent to launch the country into the adventure of war. I also trust in God, Count."

Ronderos, whose mind fluctuated between the doubts left in it by Karlonoff and the faith inspired by the Count's explanations, confessed himself incompetent to judge the matter;

he wished to arrive at a satisfactory solution, but he considered it desirable that the Count and Karlonoff should have an interview and explain their respective plans to each other. He pushed an electric bell and sent for Doctor Karlonoff. The Count explained that he had no objections whatever to a conference with the "consulting engineer," but he had asked himself the question, in his own mind, who this savant with a Russian or German name might be that was discussing and criticizing the plans of canalization drawn by the assistant engineers and checked by Bellegarde himself so carefully and after such laborious studies. A tap was heard at the door, and there appeared the bald head and the artificial smile of the undersecretary.

"Doctor Karlonoff is here awaiting your Excellency's orders," said Doctor Alcón.

The door opened. The Count, expecting to behold some Russian savant, tall, of wide forehead, fair hair and grave appearance, was greatly surprised to see coming into the room a dapper little man, swarthy, of restless eyes, and an enormous nose that appeared larger because of his lack of teeth and ill hidden by his mustache. He walked in, saluted at a distance, and with a smile of self-assurance and malice, advanced with minced steps, went over to several tables, turned over papers and books, looked at several maps and finally, with a defiant air and a shake of the head, stood in front of the Count. The General introduced them to each other.

"Count Bellegarde; Doctor Carlos Onofre Sandoval y Sabogal, Captain in the Bridges and Highways corps."

As the Count asked with a look whether the person introduced was the real Karlonoff, consulting engineer, the latter himself explained that the name "Doctor Karlonoff" was a pseudonym, a *nom de guerre* with which he used to sign his political writings, his historical essays, his geographical pamphlets, his astronomical observations, his philosophic lectures, his military treatises, his reviews, "some of which," he added with a smile, "had been stolen from him by Admiral Jurien de Lagravière for a treatise on ballistics."

There was brief hush, a moment of expectation, as when two swordsmen are about to cross swords. The Minister went over to his desk and sat down, indicating to Bellegarde a large

leather-lined arm chair on his right. The Count, grave and circumspect, waited for the minister to broach the subject, Karlonoff dragged a chair and sat down in front of them, crossing his hands over his stick. He desired to start the discussion right away and he began by remarking that there were several errors in the canalization plan, that the plats of the river had been drawn by inexperienced engineers, that. . . . But the General, with a wave of his hand, asked him to be silent, and he expressed his wish that the Count should expound his theories first. The latter unfolded his idea very slowly, very plainly, seeking the clearest terms, avoiding anything that might appear dogmatic, always with noble and sober elegance.

"The advantages? . . . I have already explained them in complete sketches which you have there, Mister Minister," he said pointing to a large portfolio with blue covers. "But, in order to make absolutely sure, I take the liberty of referring you to our experience in other countries. I will call your attention to the data my group has about the Seine, for instance, which we are at present canalizing so as to make Paris a sea port, as I have already mentioned. It is a simple truth that the most economic transportation is by means of waterways. I can translate this observation into figures; I can remember them because I was a member of the commission that studied the Seine and because I submitted a report to the Committee on Bridges and Roads. There the average rate is one tenth of a centime — I am speaking of francs — per ton per kilometer; but let us increase this rate; let us raise it to two centimes. For the 185 kilometer the Seine will have, when it is canalized, and deepened from Rouen to Paris, we will have 37 centimes, that is to say, 370 francs, Señor Minister, for a vessel of 1000 tons. We needn't compare this rate with what it would cost to carry those one thousand tons by road, and which would have been . . . let me think . . . I don't believe my memory fails me . . . it would have cost 45,000 francs. . . . Let us compare the cost by river with the cost by rail. In the railroads of our country, the average freight rate is 7 centimes, and applying this figure to the transportation of 1000 tons in a distance of 156 kilometers, we have . . . let me think, Señor Minister . . . I remember . . . this is my business . . . we



have (and he wiped his monocle to help clear his thought) we have a figure of 4080 francs, which must be increased by 750 francs for loading the cars, giving us a total cost of 4830 francs. . . .”

Karlonoff, surprised for a moment by the precision and the memory of the contractor, decided not to be left behind, and he tried to recall some figures which, in order to display some erudition, he had hurriedly read in the word CANAL in the “Germanic Cyclopedia,” and certain old books from which he frequently borrowed information for his journalistic lucubrations.

“Here we have in front of us,” continued the Count, “two figures: 370 francs and 4850 francs, which represent, respectively, the cost of transportation by two different means: vessel and railroad. . . . You can easily see, Señor Minister, the enormous advantages of canalization and transportation by water, even when we have, as in France, the railroad running along the banks of the river.”

“There is no doubt about it!” exclaimed General Ronderos, recovering his enthusiasm, his eyes shining brightly. “There is no doubt about it. And if those advantages are so great in France, they will be even greater here where our railroads, which are few and deficient, charge a freight rate twice as high as in Europe.”

“Cheap transportation increases intercourse,” added the Count, “and this intercourse, quick and economic, through the main artery of the country, means life, civilization. It is the only possible and certain means of progress for this country, destined as it is to a great development. You are right, dear Minister; railroads in this country are difficult and costly. . . . In the river we have a ready-made way; we need only to perfect it, to make it economical and to place it in such condition that large steamers, loaded with colonists who are to people its banks, may reach these rich forests and that immense and fertile valley which constitutes the heart of the republic. How about sanitary conditions? . . . The bed of the river once deepened, and with some supplementary works, there will be no more floods; the marshes will dry up, the whole region will be improved and will become as healthy as that of the Mississippi,

which before 'my group' took it in hand was deadly; now it has an air as pure as the Bois de Boulogne."

General Ronderos, who loved Colombia deeply, felt his heart beating as when he was twenty years old; his eyes shone brightly; a smile of hope, of joy, bristled up his grayish mustache, disclosing his worn and even teeth. . . . Yes, he would carry out the work, that tremendous enterprise of redemption, and he thought that even if there were obstacles to surmount, he would spare no sacrifices in order to bring to a successful completion a project that was to transform Colombia. Ah! to establish peace on the solid foundation of prosperity, wealth, freedom and general happiness . . . after having struggled with corrupt principles, after having struggled with pestilential swamps . . . what happiness! what glory! Besides, he thought, the public Treasury would not need to spend any money; the company asked only for lands for the colonists and the right of way for ships once the river had been canalized. . . . Yes, he would end his days in peace, he would die happy if he succeeded in linking his name to the enterprise, if he even managed to see the beginning of that colonization, the river with its large steamers, teeming life on its banks, the forests cleared — wealth, wellbeing, colonists by the million enriching those immense tracts of land, banishing war forever, civilizing the country,— that unfortunate country which would become opulent, strong, mighty and glorious.

It was now Karlonoff's turn to explain his ideas. During his tiresome monologue, he was prodigal with gestures and attitudes. Bending his head, with his hands in his pockets, he moved the point of his foot; he stood erect, took one hand out of his pocket, tapped on the table with his index finger, then scratched the tip of his nose with it. He meditated a while, took out the other hand. When he became heated, he spoke in a shrill voice. He opened his arms, gesticulated with his head, with his whole body. He opined that in Colombia, as had been done in France when Labadria, Manier, Roals, Gourdon and four more others thought of canalizing the Seine, the naval officers and the shipbuilders should be consulted first.

Bellegarde arched his brows in surprise; he asked if there were in Colombia any naval officers and shipbuilders.

"There aren't any," answered Karlonoff imperturbably, "but they ought to be appointed ad hoc. I, as a Captain in the Bridges and Fosses corps, would willingly consent to forming part of such a committee and even to becoming its president."

And without paying any attention to the surprise of the Count, without stopping to take breath, without a pause, for fear that he might be interrupted, that his fingers might be criticized, he resolutely launched into his scheme, in interminable, obscure phrases, piling up abstruse technical terms, going over every country, jumping from one authority to another, from one century to another. Talk about the Seine canal? Ah! they should not forget what the Emperor Julian had written about the slope of the Seine in his *Misofogon*; the woods and marshes of that remote age covered almost entirely the emplacement of Paris in a surface of 43,665 square kilometers . . . according to the corrections made from Bogotá by Karlonoff himself. . . . If at that time it rained less than now, the mean flow of the Seine, at Paris, must have oscillated between 30 and 365 cubic meters per second, whereas to-day, after eighteen centuries, in the great floods, it is 2500 cubic meters, which shows palpably that it was necessary to raise the bottom of the river to a level of 7 meters and 80 centimeters and render it navigable, like the North-American lakes described by Reclus, pages 1235 to 1239, which lakes are navigated at a cost of one twentieth of a centime by 2550 to 3825-ton steamers infinitely superior to the boats that sailed the Nile, in the time of Rameses II, those happy times when the Egyptians scientifically solved the intricate problem of river-side colonization, for they built their houses outside the reach of the floods, by means of high stockades, which stockades were initiated by the peasants of Nantes during the XVII and XVIII centuries in the dams of the Loire, a navigable river, according not alone to Strabo and Cæsar, but to the votive inscriptions of the sailors of the Loire during the Gallo-Roman period. . . .

General Ronderos lowered his head and relapsed into his perplexity, fatigue, confusion and dizziness. Bellegarde listened, with surprise at first, then with impatience, and, at last, with supreme disdain, he raised his right hand to his face, took off his monocle and remained for half an hour with his elbow on one arm of the chair, looking vacantly into space.

“ . . . And as to the plats, profiles and measurements,” continued Karlonoff, after an hour of digressions, “ which have been submitted by the company, I imagine and affirm at first sight, that they are full of incalculable and unpardonable errors, and I base my assertion on the fact that to survey thoroughly the area of a country or the slope of a river is a great deal more difficult than it would seem, and in order to demonstrate this, it will be enough for me to remind you that when the Franco-Prussian war broke out there was displayed, by the Staff officers of the German army, a map in which the territory was estimated at 533,845 square kilometers; but as soon as the war ended — that disastrous war which cost France 14,533 square kilometers — no less an organ than the famous, but always mistaken Almanac of the London Geographical Society, estimated the territory of France at 520,443 square kilometers; so that at the same time that they were paring kilometer after kilometer from France (and at this point he looked maliciously at the Count) her territory actually kept on *increasing*, thanks to the erroneous and barbarous computations published year after year by the *Annuaire des longitudes* of Paris. . . ”

At this moment Roberto Avila, who had arranged to go with Bellegarde to see the Minister, arrived at the Government Palace and hurriedly ascended the stairs. He stopped a while, fatigued by the climb. While he crossed the different chambers, he was thinking about that enterprise to which all his capital was tied.

As he entered the Ministerial chamber, he stopped for a moment and at once understood what was taking place. The General, his head bowed down, hesitated; Bellegarde was coldly saying good-by; Karlonoff had triumphed, overwhelming the Minister with an avalanche of queer names and abstruse deductions.

“ I was clearly demonstrating,” said Karlonoff, thrusting his hands into his pockets, “ I was clearly demonstrating that, not only is the canalization for ships of deep draught absolutely impracticable, but that it is founded on unpardonable errors, because the measurements of the heights are all wrong. I will explain: it is enough to take the abscissae of two pairs of stations, so that the sum of those of the second pair be equal to those of the first, and joining, two by two the corresponding points by

chords that are parallel and with their means on the same vertical. . . . Do you follow me, Don Roberto?"

"Ah! nothing could be clearer!" exclaimed Roberto. "I fancy I can see it!" And he made a sign to Bellegarde, as much as to say: "Don't be impatient; wait, I'll fix this up."

Karlonoff continued imperturbably:

"But this is not all, Señor Minister. We must look at the project from the military point of view. It is dangerous, when those steamers are able to sail the river, that they should be allowed to come so near to the capital of the republic. The day that happens, we will be lost, from the military point of view, unless we manage to build, according to the tactics of Admiral Fieramosca, forts with artillery of heavy caliber, that is to say: Maxim guns number 48, as the ministries of War and the Navy, for whom I am also consulting engineer, have advised; and for this reason I think I have clearly demonstrated that the enterprise is impracticable from the military point of view. We will be invaded as the Normans invaded Paris through the Seine. But there is something else; this is a grave matter from the point of view of Right, for the Political and Municipal Code, respecting the rights of the owners along the banks of the river, is entirely opposed to this kind of enterprises in articles 1893 to 1896."

"What articles did you say?" asked Roberto.

"1893 to 1896 of the Political Code, repeated Karlonoff unshaken.

"I don't believe that Code has any more than five hundred articles. Let's have a look at it," said Roberto, and going over to some shelves, he scanned the titles.

There was an expectant silence. Bellegarde sat down; General Ronderos straightened up, anxious to see the solution of this concrete point. This matter, of easy verification, was going to show him whether or not Karlonoff knew the subjects on which he spoke, piling up figures and names. . . . While Roberto looked through the books in the shelves, in the interrogating silence of the room, there came to the chamber, somewhat deadened by distance, the noises from the square.

"'Military Code.' . . . No. . . . 'Collec . . . ' Not this one, either. . . . 'Laws of . . . ' Here it is, General; let us see now! . . ."

He opened the volume at the last page, looked at it, smiled and handed it over to the Minister.

"Look here, gentlemen," he said: "the 'Political Code' has no such article 1893; it only has 378."

"I may have made a mistake in my figures," continued Karlonoff not in the least disconcerted, "an engineer, a geologist, a soldier, a geographer need not know anything about laws. . . . I don't give a rap about them." And passing immediately to another subject, he went on: "These plans, these maps contain as many mistakes as there are lines in them. There is only one real and authentic map of the river: The Military Map of the Magdalena, drawn by myself and submitted to the Chief of Operations in the last war."

"And, in order to draw that map, you visited those regions, I suppose?" asked Roberto.

"Modern science has spared us those troubles. I can reconstruct a whole region through the science of tectonics. It is the anatomy of the earth. With only a handful of earth, with a stone, I am like Cuvier with a bone, I can tell you depths to within a few millimeters."

"All right," said Roberto, "you may not know laws because they are not your specialty, but you surely know the Canal San Martín; there, difficulties of a similar character were surmounted."

"The Canal San Martín? . . . Of course I do! It is twelve kilometers long, but there the river is not subject to changes in its bed." And again changing the subject, he continued: "We have not taken into account seismology, another new science which is perhaps unknown to M. Bellegarde."

"I don't know," said Roberto, stopping him, "whether the Canal San Martín is twelve kilometers long or not . . . maybe it is . . . but I am perfectly sure although I don't know any seismology, that it has four acts, six tableaux and I don't know how many scenes."

"Four acts . . ." interrupted Ronderos, "a canal? . . ."

"Yes, sir, it is the name of a drama."

"Señor Bellegarde," exclaimed General Ronderos rising, "I have confidence in your project and we will sign the contract!"

## CHAPTER IV

## CONQUERORS

"ALEJANDRO, have you ever seen in Europe such a landscape as this?"

"I feel intoxicated with the perfumes from this mountain."

They had left Honda at dawn, and the heavy air, the unbearable heat had given place to delightful breezes that wafted the acrid odor of the barks of the trees, the smell of the mosses and resins and the fragrance of the flowers hidden in the jungle.

In the silence of the early morning one could only hear the horses' shoes striking the steep road, the warbling of some early bird and the dropping of the dew as it trickled down the leaves and fell on the road.

The dawn, the breath of the mountains, his friends' company, — imparted to Roberto an exuberance of life, of strength, of happiness. Truly, life is a pleasure.

They came to a clearing and saw above their heads a dome of diaphanous blue. As the fog disappeared, the landscape, down in the distance, appeared as if in the transparency of a twilight. A new light shone; from the sea of fog emerged the sharp outline of the peaks, the masses of foliage and the expanse of the valley. When the fog was finally dissipated, the valley appeared far away at the bottom, cut from end to end, in narrow bends, by the Magdalena.

The forest awoke. There was a concert of trills and songs and a fluttering of wings. The birds flew from the neighboring branches, crossed the road diagonally and vanished again chirping among the trees.

"What happiness," exclaimed Alejandro, "to breathe this damp cool air laden with the emanations from the forest, that fills my lungs and intoxicates me like wine. . . . How beautiful this immensity that has never been measured and is not described in any guide book . . . this. . . . Hold on a moment! . . . Hold on a moment! you have inspired me with a magnificent . . . a sublime thought. . . . Where did we put it? . . . Yes, in this bag on the right hand side. . . ."

He produced a silver flask, unscrewed the stopper, poured out

some liquid and took off his hat, exposing his ruddy face framed by his beard and his golden locks.

"Here is to my country, the most beautiful, the best beloved of all countries!"

In spite of his joyful tone, there was a touch of emotion and tenderness in Alejandro's voice.

They continued the ascent.

"Faust, Faust," exclaimed Roberto, "you are always the same . . . you are always yearning for new sensations, seeking all excesses and all contrasts."

"That reminds me, sir weathervane, have you finished that translation of Faust?"

"It is beyond my power; Goethe encloses the diamond of his thought in the hardest of quartz. The translator has a stone-cutter's job, and I was not made for that sort of work . . . it is more suited to the patience and the tenacity of Doctor Alcón. . . ."

"Talking of something else. . . . Do you know that General Ronderos has slated us for the Senate?"

"No! . . . who would care for that sort of thing? . . . I suppose you told him that it is impossible, that we decline the honor, that. . . ."

"I haven't told him anything of the kind, for the simple reason that we cannot abandon him in the struggle. . . . He himself warned me that he was not inviting us to go to Tabor but to Calvary."

They heard behind them, down the slope, the noise of rolling stones and of a herd of animals struggling up the mountain. They stopped and turned round to have a look. It was Casanova, Alejandro's steward, and Wilan Gil, nicknamed Chispas, General Rondero's steward, bringing fresh animals and two carriage horses newly imported from Europe.

"How are the sorrels?"

They were two thoroughbreds. Under their soft shining hides, one could see their veins and their powerful muscles.

"See how scared they are, walking through this wilderness," said Alejandro.

"And without deigning to speak to those mules, just as we noticed in *El Moro*, by Uncle Manuel."

They reached the height and began the descent. At the bottom



of the hill roared a stream which rushing down to the road, formed a pool and then continued its headlong course down the valley.

The mules thrust their ears forward and dilated their nostrils as they rushed towards the pool. The early rays of the sun, shining through the tremulous transparency of the water, gilded the stones at the bottom.

"You go ahead," said Alejandro to Gil and Casanova, "and tell them to get our lunch ready at El Consuelo."

After changing their mounts, the stewards hastened ahead and the two friends continued on their way.

"And how is business?"

"Business?" asked Roberto. "To be perfectly frank . . . you know that I started in business with very little . . . almost nothing. . . . Well, that little has gone on increasing . . . increasing. . . ."

Alejandro was on the point of saying something when a man, who was traveling in a hurry, caught up to them. He gave them a nasty look, with a mixture of surprise and disappointment, spurred on his horse and left them behind.

"Do you know him?" asked Roberto.

"No."

"He is Escipión Socarraz."

"Escipión? . . . With that air, without stopping? . . . What has happened?"

"That is a story . . . which is very often repeated."

"I left him four years ago at the El Sauzal with his old man, who wanted to teach him to work."

"He will never learn that, and there is not one man alive who will be able to teach him, either. . . . Well, you know that the poor old man, who still goes barefooted, spent the little money he had saved for thirty years to send his son to college. But no one could make Escipión study. He coveted honors and distinctions, but he would not work for them and he asserted that the professor disliked him because he was poor and that the rich students were favorites. He was expelled from college because he started I don't know what revolt. He went home saying that he did not care to study any longer and that he was anxious to start work right away. The old man gave him all he had, and Escipión made it vanish in quick time. He asked for more

money; the old man refused it. Escipi3n forged his father's signature trying to get it; his father, when he discovered the crooked deal, threw him out of the house."

"And now?" . . .

"Can't you guess? . . . Now he is an aggressive and humorous journalist; he writes for *El Escorp3n*. . . . No, he does not write. He is the responsible editor. He lets others write and he faces the music and answers for everything. . . . The title of the paper will show you its aims. . . . I bet he is on his way to meet Land3buro and place his paper and himself at his disposal."

"No one would benefit more by war than Escipi3n. . . . Men of his type obtain through our revolutions, at one jump, as if by magic, the social position, the wealth and the celebrity that others only reach through great efforts, after a life of arduous and meritorious toil."

"Those are Land3buro's men, his future soldiers, his future captains, and . . . believe me, it will be a terrible army, for they cannot lose anything by defeat, whereas they can gain everything if they triumph."

For a long time they continued in silence along their way with their heads hanging down. Their enthusiasm was disappearing at the prospects of war.

Suddenly Alejandro pulled up the reins, and looking at his friend fixedly, he said:

"Let us talk again about your cousin In3s. . . . Has the wedding been arranged yet? No? When I went away, you were full of enthusiasm. . . . Is she as beautiful, as aristocratic, as discreet as ever?"

"No. . . ."

"No? How is that?"

"No; she is now more beautiful, more aristocratic, more discreet than ever."

"And you love her . . . and she returns the compliment. So you are getting married, at last . . . No no. You are always like a butterfly; you'll neither finish the translation from Goethe, nor Don Melchor's biography, nor your colonial studies, and you will not complete one sonnet in your life and you will not marry In3s."

"Maybe."

"Look here, I am rather pleased at that. Inés is not for you and you are not for Inés."

"Well, there is not a woman so much like me as she is," replied Roberto enthusiastically. "I feel that when I am with her. Same tastes, same temperaments. . . ."

"Exactly! a couple of dreamers, a couple of wills o' the wisp. That will never do! They say that two strong wills should not be united, nor two weak ones, either. You need another kind of woman. You must oppose stern reality to your dreams, and resolution to your hesitancy. For a complicated nature like yours, you need a simple, unsophisticated, practical, primitive nature, like that of a girl who came up the river with me. . . . You say I never remember you? . . . Well, I thought of you when I saw that girl. She comes with her father, a millionaire who is going to settle down in Bogotá. That girl certainly would suit you. . . ."

"Nothing doing! A scientific marriage, according to program, according to schedule. . . . A *mariage de convenance*? . . . that won't suit me. If I ever get married, it will be on the spur of the moment."

"Even her name is pretty," insisted Alejandro. "Lola . . . Lola Montellano."

"Montellano!" exclaimed Roberto, arching his brows with displeasure. "He is the very man who has bought our house, through an agent."

"Did you sell your house?" asked Alejandro with a mixture of surprise and regret. "Well, that is an argument in favor of what I was telling you. Of the vital money question, you only know one side: you know how to spend it."

"And what about yourself?" Roberto questioned ironically. "Ah! I respect in you the master who has the authority of experience. . . . You will have to sell half of Sauzal and Cebaderos to defray the expenses of your last trip and of the contents of those boxes there . . . I can guess," he continued, pointing to the ten mules that carried Alejandro's baggage, "that you have there, tapestries, bronzes, works of art, all the surprises that you have promised me . . . I can tell you right away who your buyer will be. It would be very funny if it were that same Montellano. I guess the father will buy your estates, and I recommend that you marry his daughter. . . ."

"That Montellano . . . you will meet him to-morrow, perhaps to-day. . . . He has amused me very much during the voyage. There is a strong contrast between his method of seeing and feeling things and our own way; but he is not a man to be laughed at; he is a formidable fighter, a winner. He has made a fortune by dint of muscle and brains . . . through hard work, as he says. Some one has told me the story of his life. He arrived, twenty years ago, at the forest of Taguate, with only his wife, an ax in one hand and a fixed idea in his head, namely, to get rich. He cleared the forest tree by tree and snake by snake and . . . but you'll hear him tell you about it. . . . At the end of ten years, those mountain sides were covered with fields of grazing grass and sugar cane. In order to get his mill going, he diverted a stream that passed through the town. The citizens protested; they were dying of thirst. It was then that a struggle started between the town and the mill, and that struggle is still going on. Sometimes the citizens, armed to the teeth; attack the one hundred men at the mill, beat them and set fire to the sugar plantations. . . . Other times Montellano sweeps down on the town, the fight begins, swords flash in the sun, his men win, blood flows freely . . . and the water also flows through his mill. One month, only one month of grinding at the mill and the safe is full again. After his strokes with the ax, he tries some financial strokes. He is the greatest buyer of real estate in those regions. Finally, he has decided to invest his money in houses and estates . . . and he comes to exercise his talents, his energy, his audacity in a far wider field: he comes to conquer the capital."

"So that the girl," said Roberto sarcastically, "has most excellent qualities. She is hardworking and a good housekeeper."

"Come on, let us talk seriously. I don't recommend you that girl because of her money. . . . Of course not! One ought to be the master, not the slave of money. . . . But you really need some one that will take advantage of your initiative and talent, not for the benefit of others but for yourself. She possesses precisely what you lack: ambition, a will that will guide you, that will force you to think of the realities of life, that will make you understand your duties."

"My duties? . . . Ah! yes, any one who marries her will have plenty of duties."

"No, she will make the yoke easy to bear; you'll manage to shape her to suit your fancy."

"Yes, any one who marries her will have plenty of duties, for father-in-law Montellano will get mixed up in his real state affairs. . . . Thanks! I must decline the girl. . . . How could I leave Inés? And now even less than ever. I would be guilty of desertion in the face of the enemy!"

"Enemy? . . . Who? . . . A rival? . . ."

"You'll make his acquaintance and he'll be a great friend of yours. . . . He is a man who maintains that the only aim in life is art . . . a stubborn Wagnerian who admires in the Master, rather the apostle of art than the artist that he was. He is a dangerous rival. You can easily see how much you and Inés will like him, with those ideas of his. . . . I have never seen in any one such a perfect balance between the head and the heart. . . . You see, I can do him justice. . . . He has even conquered me. . . . I have risked in his enterprise all that I have, all that remains to me, because he is a great contractor."

"And what is his name?"

"Bellegarde?"

"I know him by name. I learned that he was coming to Colombia and that some friends had given him letters of introduction for Aunt Teresa."

"And that's why she invited him to dinner on New-Year's day. . . . That very night I noticed that Inés managed to melt the ice of which he is made up. . . . Although he does not seem to have ever loved any women except those on pictures or in statues, I noticed certain signs and gestures that showed me he is not indifferent to living beauty."

"And what did you see?"

"I repeat, almost imperceptible gestures, tones of voice, furtive glances."

"And is that all? . . . That isn't much, even for an Othello."

"There is something more serious than that. I was standing near the piano, besides Inés; there was a mirror in front of me, and without his suspecting anything, I saw him approach a table on which Inés had left a bouquet of Castile roses and I saw him take up two or three and conceal them furtively."

"Is that so? . . . I am very glad of it! And I hope Inés will

respond to his affection. . . . And what about his enterprise?"

"As I told you last night, Bellegarde has a redeeming idea, a colossal project, the canalization of the Magdalena and the colonization of the forests on the banks of the river. The contract with the government has already been signed."

"That's great!" exclaimed Alejandro. "I think the idea is admirable."

"Yes, admirable, not only for the country generally, but for ourselves particularly," added Roberto with increasing enthusiasm. "I told you that we have sold our house, partly to pay our debts and partly to buy some shares in this enterprise. . . . You also should buy a few shares. I have asked Bellegarde to reserve some for you. Ah! you shall see! We'll be rich . . . no, not rich, millionaires."

"And have you paid for the shares?"

"Yes."

"So that you have burned your ships? All your future, all your happiness is tied to the success of this enterprise."

"Everything. On it depends my mother's peace of mind, my position in life, the fulfilment of my ambitions, my marriage. . . . I have staked everything on one card."

"Yes, I will also take some shares," exclaimed Alejandro, glancing at the vast panorama with an expression of triumph. "I will also take some shares! . . . And while you help Bellegarde at Bogotá, I will come to these forests and use up my energy, this excess of vigor which constitutes both my happiness and my misfortune. . . . Ah! we'll accomplish wonderful things! . . . Yes, I'll sell Cebaderos and buy some shares. . . ."

Suddenly, Roberto made a gesture of disillusionment.

"Wonderful things? . . . Ah! if there were only peace! . . ."

"There shall be peace. It is true that Landábuero has gone up the river haranguing all the towns on his way. It is true that Cardoso, according to a rumor along the coast, has been sneaking along the frontier; but the country wants peace. . . . Landábuero's colossal vanity, Sánchez Méndez's spite, the ambition of Cardoso, and Polanco, Socarráz's jealousy . . . all will go up in smoke and will vanish before the breezes of progress and wealth. The nation will finally come to know those men and learn to despise them. Ourselves, under the leadership of

General Ronderos, will exert our utmost energy against those barbarians and against wild nature. . . . This enterprise must be carried out, and it shall be carried out."

As he spoke, his faith, his enthusiasm, his warmth revealed his true self. His athletic body seemed to emanate will and power. In his blue eyes shone the spark of madness which inspires to impossible adventures and gigantic enterprises.

"Yes, I'll go to those forests; I'll banish the crocodiles from the river; I'll build a great port. Where the tigers roar, the locomotives shall whistle; where there is nothing but an impenetrable jungle, cities shall arise."

They had arrived at another summit; they turned round and contemplated the vast horizon.

They continued on their way, intoxicated with their own ideas, discussing details, peering into the future, outlining their dreams of struggle, prosperity and progress. Yes, they would achieve the conquest of those immense forests, impenetrable, full of swamps, inhabited by wild beasts. The river, converted into a deep channel, would allow the big steamers to pass with their crowds of immigrants and would go back again with the produce of those fertile regions. A world would awake there, a world that had been divined and discovered, but had remained unconquered. And from that intact, virgin world, full of incalculable treasures hidden in the shadow of its forests, there would issue a hubbub of life, a hymn of resurrection, a clamoring of bells and anvils from the new towns. Busy cities, throbbing with life would emerge from the smiling plantations, and amidst the thundering of industry, the humming of commerce and the rolling of gold, millions of men, happy, rich and enjoying peace, would bless and acclaim the founders of their prosperity and greatness.

And the two men, descendants of the Spanish conquerors, feeling within them the awakening of an instinct for noble adventures and gigantic conceptions, intoxicated by the endless horizon, stimulated by the perfumes of that tropical morning, extended their arms in a wide gesture of dominion, hope and victory.

## CHAPTER V

## HAPPENINGS AT THE INN

THEY had almost reached the inn, when Roberto shouted with surprise:

"What's that?"

In the middle of the square, in front of the inn, two men, face to face, were challenging each other; one of them, slender, swarthy, with a black beard, held a club in one hand; the other, big, fat, cross-eyed, tightly clutched a razor. Through one of the windows peered the panic stricken face of a girl.

"Be quiet!" shouted Alejandro. "Be quiet, Escipión! . . . What's the matter, Milán?"

The two warriors, the reporter of *El Escorpión* and General Ronderos' steward, after casting a murderous glance at each other, a look with which they seemed to postpone their quarrel, withdrew.

A plump woman issued from the inn. She greeted the travelers joyfully and then began to pour forth complaints. Those two young men gave her no peace at all. . . . She was quite happy at Sabana, at *El Sauzal*, but she had had to move. There was a quarrel like that one every week; all because of her daughter Bibiana, who did not love either one of them or loved them both. . . . Finally, she had set up her inn there, far away, but the devil brought the two lovers after her daughter. . . . Some fine day there would be an accident! . . .

"The razor . . . the club . . ." laughed Alejandro remembering Roberto's fits of jealousy. "How is that? . . ."

"Get off your mules," said the innkeeper. "Come and get your lunch, for if you don't hurry. . . . I am going to have a lot of people to-day."

They went in. At the table, with his back to the door, a man was hastily swallowing a dish of eggs. Above his white coat could be seen his neck and his bald head, red and greasy.

"My dear González Mogollón," said Alejandro, throwing his arms from behind around the neck of the man. "You here?"

"Yes, my friend. How glad I am to see you! Four years without seeing you! I knew you had come up the river on



board the *Panchita Stevenson*. Where did you leave the Sisters of Charity? I came here to meet them, because, you know, my life is devoted to the poor. . . . I don't want to make a noise with my affairs," he added in a droning voice and gesticulating furiously, "but I may tell you that to-day I have three plans and one project on my hands. Look at this piece of ribbon in my watch chain; I tied it there so that I could remember not to let General Landáburo go by without speaking to him about an agreement between the club *La Revaluación*, of which he is the leader, and that of *La Integridad*, to which I belong. They tell me that he is in a good frame of mind, and that he is preaching peace. Look at this piece of cotton I have in my ear; it is to remind me that I must found here, as I have done at other inns, a series of moral readings, compulsory and gratis . . . a practical idea for education and uplift. While the guests eat, whether they will or not, I get them a reader who entertains them with the most edifying literature. Besides, I am waiting for the Sisters of Charity, to see if they will take charge of the Teaching Hospital, another idea of mine, a practical idea, absolutely practical. And, mind you, I don't speak about it because it concerns me, for my thoughts are always on heavenly things."

"You are always so busy, Señor González, with hundreds of plans in your head at the same time."

"My friend, everybody curses González Mogollón, but I always win my point."

"Who did you leave behind on the road?" added González.

"I left behind the two Sisters, with whom I was very friendly during the journey," said Alejandro walking up and down the hall.

"And Landáburo?" asked González.

"Oh, yes; he also remained behind. He could have arrived yesterday, but he stopped at Honda, doing some propaganda work, spouting against the policy of the closed door and against the white terror and about the rights of the people and the law number 22 with its iniquitous paragraph, but . . . withal preaching peace, a peace after his own fashion."

"I bet my head," roared González Mogollón, striking his own neck with the edge of his hand, "yes, my head, that before fifteen days I have made the leaders of the two parties come to an agreement. I have already arranged a banquet. . . . Landá-

buro said peace? . . . Then we shall have peace for twenty years."

"Talking about actors," said Alejandro, "the Opera Company is coming."

"And the pri . . . ma don . . . na," interrupted Roberto sneeringly.

"Yes, man, a marvel, a charmer. Even her name is charming: Rondinelli, Swallow. If you could only hear her in *Aida*, in the final duet with Malatesta."

"Malatesta . . . Rondinelli . . . Opera," added González in the attitude of a man who is watching somebody. "I'll get the hold of them. . . . I'll squeeze them . . . you'll see how I get a benefit night out of them for my Teaching Hospital . . . and so that I won't forget, I'll undo this button in my waistcoat."

"Look, Roberto," said Alejandro in low tones, "There you have Montellano's daughter."

"The millionaire? . . . yes, yes," interrupted González with a threatening and malicious gesture, "even if he swears and comes away with his *non serviam*, I must get twenty thousand dollars out of him for the Society for Compulsory Salvation . . . and about thirty thousand for the hospital I have already mentioned."

Montellano's spurs resounded on the cobblestones, and with his legs wide open, so as not to trip, he went over to speak to the landlady about the lunch.

Lunch was served very shortly after, and with appetizing viands the travelers restored their forces, exhausted by hunger and the early start.

After lunch, Montellano, still wearing his riding coat, his spurs and his hat, leaned on a stool against the wall and gave himself up to the enjoyment of a quiet digestion. Almost asleep, with his eyes half closed, he was thinking of his estate, *La Danta*, the sugar mill, the bloody fights for the water, the river of honey, the river of gold. He thought of the other properties, in the warm lands and in the cold lands, of the money loaned out, of the tardy debtors, of the business transactions Roberto had mentioned, of the probable yields of a certain property, of the new business that was awaiting him at the capital, of the new house he had bought without seeing it. And as he thought of these things, he faintly perceived the objects that surrounded

him: the mules stamping on the stones while they chewed their fodder, a brooding hen, scratching in the grass, followed by her chicks. He heard the noises of the inn, of a monotonous conversation and of tin which was being trailed around by a boy, and, drowning all these noises, enveloping everything in a soothing lullaby, came the murmur of the earth, a murmur made up of the roaring of the streams, the silky rustling of the banana trees and the sleepy song of the cicadas. Suddenly, to that symphony was added the thunderous snoring of Montellano, interrupted now and then by incoherent words: one hundred thousand . . . double the rent . . . go on with the harvest . . . not one cent less. . . .

Meanwhile, Dolores went out to stretch her legs, holding up her riding habit. She wished to take a look at the road they were going to follow, and at one side of the house, she saw the narrow steps of the road higher up, in the frigid atmosphere, the peaks of the mountain range, on which rested threatening clouds. Then she went over to the other side of the house and glanced at the road they had left behind. She moved a few steps and stood at the edge of a steep bank, over the warm earth below. Near her, the dry leaves were shaken by some lizards. The top of a palm that grew at the bottom of the precipice, waved like a fan at her feet, and among its leaves flashed a bunch of red fruit. From the trees hung the transparent red and purple bells of some creepers. An enormous butterfly, with its velvety wings shining in the light, crossed in front of her.

"I was right," said Alejandro, leaning against the frame of the door and looking at Dolores. "Look, Roberto, look at that rosy face, look at that vigorous body . . . and above all, look at those eyes."

"Yes, they are full of determination and fire."

From her high observation point, Dolores glanced at the landscape and she saw the deep wide valley extending as far as the horizon as if embracing half a continent. She trembled to see at her feet the tops of the intertwined trees waving to and fro, displaying, when their branches parted, lights and shadows and the roots, trunks and creepers that coiled like snakes fighting with each other at the bottom of the precipice. In successive waves, forest follows forest, until the waves disap-

pear in the distance. The nearest forest shines in all the splendor of its red flowers and the vivid green of its foliage. As the forests disappear in the distance, the colors become dulled and mingle with each other. Only at intervals can be seen the fans of the palm trees, the yellow flowers of the *guadales* and the black patches of the cuttings and the clearings.

From the river, as it flows through the burning sand, rises a vapor that floats along with the stream, and through this veil, torn at times by the breeze, may be seen the flash of the water.

Standing out against the sky, the cone of Tolima displays its pearly shadings and the white cap on which fall cascades of carmine and gold. An intense light, a tropical light, with streaks of red, yellow and green, floods everything in a riot of color.

Roberto, who also wished to admire the landscape and at the same time to make the acquaintance of Alejandro's Lola, approached the edge of the precipice and let his eyes wander over the magnificent landscape. He remained there as if in ecstasy, charmed by the sunshiny morning and enjoying it with his whole being, which in those moments became so sensitive that it vibrated at the slightest sensations. The leaves rustled. Dolores turned her head around and smiled. Roberto, very courteously approaching her, uttered a few formal phrases which did not displease her in the least. She encouraged him to prolong a conversation in which Roberto had an opportunity to display his wit and cleverness and all the treasures of his fantasy.

A merry chorus interrupted their conversation.

Noisily, with light colored dresses, decorated with flowers, their hats over one ear and a smile under their musketeer mustaches, the men of the Opera Company chorus came out into the square. Behind them came the tenor, Malatesta, majestically wrapped in a Scottish plaid that covered the crupper of the mule.

"All hail, Radames!" shouted Alejandro, humming the march from *Aida*.

"La-ri-la-ri . . . *Salute, caro Alessandro!*" answered the tenor in a thunderous voice, swelling out his shirt with his powerful lungs. He took off his hat, wiped his brow and his

brown locks with his handkerchief, rubbed his broad neck and stared at Alejandro with his olive colored pupils.

"*Cuanto caldo!* . . . Heavens! How hot!" he exclaimed.

Madame Rondinelli came into the square and stopped her mule.

"*Eccola qua!*" said Roberto, sticking his elbow into Alejandro's ribs. "Really, a beauty! Let's help her to get off her mule."

"Go on! You'll find that she has one of those heads you have admired a hundred times in the canvases of the Venetian masters."

Roberto went over near her and admired the elegance of her tall well-built figure and the beautiful neck with its sculptural curves. Her features had a rhythm of lines in which one could see a lack of thoughts and worries, and her eyes had the placidity of those of a doe. Her mouth, through which flitted a disdainful smile, was very enticing and charming.

"*Alessandro! Alessandro! Quanto e bella la tua terra, ma e terribile!*<sup>1</sup> Precipices! Precipices! I was crying, crying . . ." said Madame Rondinelli, looking at Roberto with her eyes distended by fear. "This is a treacherous mule. At last I am on firm ground! Oh! *Malatesta e cascato per terra tre volte, ed io rideva* ha! ha! ha!" and she walked over to the inn arm in arm with Alejandro.

Panting, she threw her hat to one side. Roberto, following her, observed the unconscious arrogance and haughtiness of her movements, the wide gestures in which her enormous red shawl waved like a rich purple mantle and fell in wide folds that reminded one of the attitudes of a tragedian. As she spoke to Alejandro, in empty chatter, she moved her head, showing off the sculptural curves of her neck. Over the warm whiteness of her skin floated little locks, rebellious rings with amber glints and flashes of flames, and a magnificent tress, rising from the back of the neck, twisted and curled itself up on top of the head.

<sup>1</sup> *Italian.* Alexander! How beautiful your country is, but how awful! [Four lines later] Oh! Malatesta fell to the ground three times, and how I laughed!

They crossed the square, and when they reached the shadow of the inn, the noise of horses hoofs coming from the road made them turn round.

A very thin individual, of livid face and lusterless eyes, sweating and wearing a velvet waistcoat and very long hair, arrived at the inn.

"Alejandro," said Roberto in ironical tones, pointing towards the new arrival, "let me introduce you to the poet Mata, editor of *La Pagoda de Nietzsche*; one of our notables . . . one of Colombia's hopes . . ."

"Thanks, thanks," said Mata alighting, "thanks; only one little volume of *Nitroglicerinas* which have been quoted in all the American papers, including *La Abeja*, of Tehuantepec. If you insist," he added with a frown of inspiration, "I will recite to you my verses of the last number of *La Pagoda*. I'll go over the last verses, the ones that have been applauded most.

"I would like, in my tomb, under lotus buds,  
To drink the shadow among mummies of immovable eyes."

"My friend," interrupted Alejandro very much annoyed, "you so young, yet thinking of death?"

"Yes, sir. Death is my beloved, my eternal sweetheart, as I say in my next volume: *Amor Dionisíaco*," and he continued:

"Let, then, my corpse be covered with the sands of the Nubian  
Strand, like the pleats of a fair shroud,  
And instead of priests of hypocritical sighs,  
Let raucous bonzes read their prayers from their papyri."

He halted.

"Ah! a great idea! . . . I'll leave this poem right here, in the album of *El Consuelo*. . . Here, landlady, bring me the album!" and he wrote down:

"To my unforgettable friend General Landáburo, whom I came to meet on an important political mission:

. . . . .

"Instead of a cross and a Latin inscription, I want magnificent  
Signs on my gravestone with yellow hieroglyphics.

Instead of the requiescat, in Gothic characters,  
I want the suggestive demotic characters. . . ."

When he finished writing, taking advantage of a moment when no one was looking, he took out a little syringe, pulled up one leg of his trousers, and closing his eyes and biting his lip with pain, he injected some morphia into his calf.

As he bent down, Mata dropped some printed sheets from his pocket. Roberto picked them up: they were the proofs of *La Pagoda de Nietzsche*, with an account of the "splendid and popular" reception of General Landábuero at *El Consuelo*.

"Look here," said Roberto to Alejandro, "here we have the account of a meeting. A meeting with speeches and everything, right in this place, to-day, a meeting that has not taken and never will take place. . . . Ah, Landábuero and Mata . . . that's a fine couple for you. . . . See, the poet is now in the next room, nailing Landábuero's photo on the wall with the help of Escipión Socarráz."

The Sisters of Charity arrived and crossed the square. González Mogollón went forward to meet them.

Alejandro was seized by a deep emotion and became very gloomy.

"Is that sister, so young and distinguished," asked Roberto, "the little marchioness of Montemar?"

And Roberto admired the tall figure, the queenly carriage, the ascetic paleness, the fascination of her blue pupils, the imperturbable calmness of eternity that was revealed by her whole person.

Roberto was going to continue, but he was interrupted by a tremendous racket.

"Hurrah for General Landábuero!" shouted Mata when he heard the clatter of horses' hoofs in the court. On hearing him shout, all the travelers came out and they beheld a man of military aspect with gauntlets and riding boots, seated on a red velvet saddle with yellow fringed trappings and pistol cases. He rode a horse who wagged his tail furiously as he felt the spurs on his sides and from whose mouth issued blood-tinged foam.

"Hurrah for the immortal Landábuero!" yelled Socarráz.

The horseman twirled his mustache nervously, sat up straight

on his saddle in a heroic pose and cast a conqueror's glance on the group composed of gentlemen, chorus people, Sisters of Charity, servants and grooms.

"General Landáburo!" exclaimed Mata, coming forward with a glass in his hand and running an imminent risk of being squashed to death by the restless horse, "allow me, in the name of *La Pagoda de Nietzsche* and of the *Revaluación*, to offer you this glass of welcome. . . . Hurrah for the hero of our ideal! Hurrah for the eminent republican! Hurrah for the scourge of Cesarism! Hurrah for the terror of the grafters! Hurrah for the future founder of the Republican party of the *Revaluación!*"

Landáburo tried to calm his steed, accommodated himself in the saddle, threw out his chest, extended his hand, in which shone a silver handled whip, made a sweeping gesture, smiled, fixed his eyes far away, as if he had a sea of heads in front of him, and began to speak as if he were at a review.

"Soldiers! . . . I mean citizens, and ladies:

"I can see in your moist eyes the satisfaction you feel at finding me once again in your midst, after a year or more of absence from this country, which I would call Mother country, although here our rights are denied us, our rights which we should never let sink into oblivion.

"I am addressing you at this time, although we are with the foot in the stirrup, so to speak, because it would appear very strange that a man of my fame, and who has rendered such invaluable services to the great cause of the *Revaluación*, should pass by without a word to those who, without distinction of race or nationality, are listening to me so courteously. It would be an unpardonable sin on my part, and one for which I would never forgive myself, should I not address a few words to the neutral and passive masses that are listening to me and that live in a continual struggle for their daily bread, born for and living in servitude, like feudal children of the glebe, at this period of exclusivism when the policy of the closed door rules the land. Yes, although the supporters of the government and the government themselves live in Asiatic luxury, dressed in silk that costs five hundred dollars a yard, while you have only a few tatters to cover your flesh; although



they dwell in opulent palaces while you live in miserable hovels, I advise you, as a matter of prudence, to live in and for peace, and to preach it to the four winds."

The people at the inn, standing in single file, listened to the harangue, some with surprise, some with curiosity, some with astonishment, some with amusement.

"I know for a fact," added Landáburo, "that my appearing speaking of peace, like Charles Albert of Savoy, with his sword in its sheath, will swell with pride the flunkeys of the government; I know for a fact that the iniquity of article 22 with its frightful paragraph, will not be admitted; I know for a fact that we will continue to be denied our share of sun, air and water; I know for a fact that, forgetting the blood I have shed in all the Departments, they will continue to mock at my *chiriquiteño* or *chirequitaño* origin, as they say. Never mind! Let us continue to bear, for the sake of peace, the iron heel on our necks. Long live peace! For when in the clock of the nations the white hour of freedom strikes, there will always be found among the ashes a few dying embers that gathered together and blown mightily will burst into a flame that will be like the dawn of better days.

"I advise peace so that we shall not throw any more human victims into the hungry maw of the hydra of war. The hour of the Revolution has not dawned yet. Long live peace! Convinced already of the uselessness of recrimination, let us cast water on our camp fires and let us fill our soldiers kits, not with bullets but with articles for export."

"Long live peace!"

"I, who have always been the first man to seize a rifle and the one to fire the last shot, I feel that I have enough authority to preach peace. The last disastrous and devastating revolution was a tremendous object lesson to show the country what war is. To me belongs the honor, by no means small and which you certainly won't deny me, of having completely discredited revolutions."

"Long live peace!"

González Mogollón did not lose a syllable; he was deeply moved, and stood at Landáburo's feet, blew his nose loudly, dried his tears, jumping back and forth and turning about so as to avoid the horse's caracoling.

"General," he exclaimed, "you have stirred me. I invite you this very moment to lay the cornerstone of the Teaching Hospital. A magnificent work; the plans were drawn up by Doctor Karlonoff. And you must make me another speech like this one, with plenty of peace in it . . . plenty of harmony, and respect for authority. . . ."

Then, turning toward Robert and Alejandro with a certain air of reproach:

"Well, friends, why don't you applaud? Now we're really assured of peace for twenty years."

As the torrent of words continued to pour forth in the yard, La Rondinelli asked Roberto, in a low voice:

"Who is speaking? . . . I don't understand. . . . A tooth-puller? . . . Is he selling patent-medicines? . . . A wandering doctor? . . . Some tippler? Or a big gossip?"

"A wily politician, sefiorita."

## CHAPTER VI

### GLORY AND GRIEF

"GOOD-BY, Roberto."

"Good-by, Faust."

"I'll expect you at the Bicontinental. Then we'll take in the opera; they're giving *Werther*; don't forget."

Alejandro left.

The huge key turned in the lock, the door creaked and Roberto entered his family's old manse, which for months had been unoccupied; he crossed the outer vestibule and found the yard invaded by grass, and some sparrows, like the proprietors of the place, flying from the garden to the entablature of the colonnade. To the left of the low corridor, wide and solid, and constructed as if it were to be mounted with courtly deliberation, there spread the stone staircase. From the wall to the high balustrade stretched spiders' webs.

In the center of the garden the grotesque mask of the fountain, as usual, was belching gushes of water into the stone basin; amid the solitude of the patio it seemed that the

water was sobbing and weeping at the desertion of the owners.

Endeavoring to combat his gloomy feelings, he mounted the staircase with assumed nonchalance, crossed the wide corridor and penetrated into the obscurity of the spacious salon, which was hung with a double row of family portraits,— the ancestral canvases, which loomed from the dark background, whereon glittered the Avilas' thirteen blue bezants against a field of gold. He had come to take down these paintings before delivering the house to its new owners; he stopped for a moment to contemplate them and imagined that he could feel the proud faces gazing down upon him with a look of resentment and astonishment. They had been there for years and years, motionless in their gold frames, forming part of the family and serving as an example to successive generations. He approached the first portrait: the companion of the Catholic Monarchs, the founder of the family. As he removed it, Roberto, with mingled feelings of love and sadness, read the inscription once more: "Don Pedro Avila. Lord of the states of las Navas and Villafranca, vassal of the king and of his Council, first Count of Risco and of Cadahalso, fought in the battle of Albufera against Portugal. Took Cadahalso by force of arms, for which the monarchs gave him the title. He served personally and with his followers in the capture of Granada."

Roberto, fascinated afresh by the brilliancy of the warrior's array stood in contemplation; the Count was represented as standing, clad in half armor; the helmet, adorned with crimson plumes, was placed upon a small table covered with scarlet velvet. To this martial outfit was added a coat of mail, red embroidered breeches, white buckskin boots, with spurs. Roberto removed the portrait and placed it upon the floor. He passed to the next. The soldier of Quesada: Alonso Avila y Cabrera, who, in his iron costume stood erect on the canvas with both hands resting upon the hilt of his sword. His eyes glanced defiantly from under the steel of the helmet.

Don Miguel de Avila y Arévalo, wrapped in his black toga, against which stood out the cross of the Order; his face framed in his wig; his hand placed against some yellow parchments. Down from the wall he came, too. The fourth: Doctor Melchior de Avila y Castillo, Fiscal of Guatemala,

whence he came and progressed to the post of Oidor of Santafé, in 1702. As Roberto took this painting from the wall a nail made a wide rent in the toga; he thought he could hear a groan as the canvas tore, and with a vague fear carefully put the portrait to one side, irresolute and shaken. There remained ten portraits and it seemed that one after the other they asked him: "Why are you throwing us out?" And he, without removing his eyes, wishing that they might understand him, thought in reply: "It is not my fault."

Whereupon there came to his mind the chain of events that had at last compelled him to surrender the paternal mansion.

With that clarity with which the past flares up in critical moments, there appeared to him the ruin of the Avilas' vast fortune, brought about by political overturns and successive revolutions.

His grandfather, Don Cristóbal, had received the inheritance intact: fertile estates that bore the names of battles in which the family's founder had figured: *El Risco*, *Villafranca*, *la Sabana*; *Las Navas*, *Cadahalso*,— with extensive tracts upon the river Magdalena. Don Cristobal encumbered his property to aid the government, which had been attacked by three distinct revolutions. In the last one the revolutionists triumph, impose contributions upon him, expel him from the country, and he dies in exile, an octogenarian, amid poverty and privation.

His father, educated in England and possessing aristocratic, literary and artistic tastes, denies his calling and learns many industries. He goes to Cuba, to Yucatán; he acquires capital, machinery, hires laborers; he installs himself in the estates upon the Magdalena, and just when fortune is beginning to smile upon him, when he has erected sugar mills, tobacco factories, and has developed the cultivation and exploitation of textile plants, . . . war breaks out, burning, demolishing, ruining everything.

Going back now to the earliest of his personal recollections, almost lost in the haze of his childhood, Roberto sees himself one night on the estate of *El Risco*, with his mother and his sister Elisa, then yet an infant.

Outside there is suddenly heard the clash of arms; the terrified servants give the alarm; he is dressed hurriedly, his mother takes the infant in her arms, they climb a hill, cross

the wild passes, take refuge in a hut, and at daybreak behold the soldiers gather all the cattle of the farm, force the animals out onto the road and drive them in the direction of Bogotá. The government, as he learned later, had in this manner collected a war contribution that had been imposed upon his widowed mother and which she had been unable to pay. His mother's face came to him, with its seal of ineradicable melancholy, — her kind, sad eyes, which all at once, without cause, became moist with tears, as if her thoughts were ever centered upon her misfortune. He could behold, too, the outburst of tears that had occurred when she had been forced to sell the estates in order to pay the debts, which had been increased by the interest of many years.

Roberto, too, had wished to work, even to redeem the former family home, and had gone off to a mountain, the sole remnant of the vast territorial fortune. With infinite effort, assuming new debts, he had overcome the mountain and started a plantation of coffee trees. But war, with its sinister regularity, had appeared. It was then that he served in his first campaign, under General Ronderos. Returning to the capital, he found there the joy and the honors of victory, and also received news that the revolutionists had bivouacked for months and months on his plantations.

At that moment it had come to him that it was for him to perform the definitive liquidation,—that he alone must receive the blow of the collapse.

He must witness, dispiritedly and lacking all strength for the struggle, the final scene of the shipwreck. Of the royal legacy, despite all efforts to preserve it, there remained only this fragment, this house which he was going to transfer that very afternoon, and with the loss of which he beheld the splendor of the Avilas vanish forever.

Upon the portrait that lay nearest his feet he read again the motto *Glory and Grief*, and it occurred to him that surely that had been more grief than glory.

Overcome at last by the gloominess that he had been trying to shake off, he sank into an armchair, rested his head against the brocaded back and dropped his hands languidly upon the carved arms. He glanced at the portraits that lay upon the floor: "There is Don Pedro Ávila, the first of the family . . .

and I am the last! He founded the house; . . . I have come to deliver into the hands of another" (and he smiled bitterly). "These first two men were persons with red blood and will power, men of action, who, for their energy and ambition, found a world of Moors to combat, a world of Indians to conquer."

His eyes wandered sadly along the row of gowned celebrities, judges and fiscals. . . . "They, too, discovered for their imaginations and their chivalrous sentiments a world of adventure and love in the romantic life of colonial days; for the exercise of their gifts they found the vicereignty: the education of a people, the formation of a nation, the organization of a government. These two last persons witnessed the struggle for Independence and its attainment: they had a fatherland to make great and free. The one was a companion of Nariño in the southern campaigns; the other, the constant friend of Sucre; both had scorned titles and colonial honors. All of these men were born into heroic epochs, worthy of great efforts. The iron conquistadores, through the generations, bequeathed to me drops of proud, adventurous blood; these gowned dignitaries, a taste for courtly refinements and their mystic aspirations; the heroes of the struggle for Independence, their love for great things and affection for this piece of earth; and all this former glory, all these aspirations and desires, mingling in my veins, merging in my soul, have produced as their final offshoot, at the end of all the generations, a meditative, vacillating, contradictory spirit,—a neurotic, complicated scion. The swords became rapiers, and with the effect of time have for me become converted into scalpels. These ancestors of mine were fortunate enough to live during an epoch when life was scorned and people struggled for glory. . . . I have been born into days when it is glory that is scorned, and the struggle is for existence: the struggle for life!

"There seethe within me vaguely and confusedly, ambitions and desires for something that I can't define, but which I shall be unable to realize; aspirations toward something that I shall never discover; I wander and cast aimlessly about in the space that separates this world of greatness that has been left behind from this world and prose and pettiness that surrounds me.

"And for this sort of struggle, for deceit and artifice, for

this petty prose, I am utterly incapable; I'm alien to it. . . . I haven't the aptitude nor the power to fight against a Landábuero or an Alcón; I'm one of yesterday's defeated; I battle without faith, without enthusiasm; the very impulse of ambition is born in me with the quiver of defeat,—initiative rises companioned by the certainty of failure,—illusion, with the instinct of disaster, and desire with the previous knowledge of disillusionment. . . .”

He arose and tore himself away from the spot, to escape from those fixed glances and to scatter his own thoughts. In the corridors his imagination brought to life familiar scenes of other days; the old manse was filled anew with persons; Roberto could see his mother come through the door,—the old servants walking along the passageways,—Aunt Indalecia (who had died twenty years before) with her huge shell-comb, her kerchief crossed over her bosom, watering her flowers; finally he saw a little boy running hither and thither everywhere, happy, breathless, caressed by all, and he told himself gloomily that he was that little boy. How much had happened since then! How distant were those days of games and caresses! How far away had those beloved faces gone! . . . In the solitude of the patio the water, with its monotonous, plaintive song, bemoaned the desertion of the masters. Across the way, the dining room, once so bustling with life during the meal hours, and redolent with the aroma of chocolate served in silver cups. To the left he beheld, with its wall-paper of floral design and his mother's needlework, the little bedroom where, at the age of ten, he had awaked one morning after an attack of pneumonia, beholding his mother bent over him with tear-filled eyes, lavishing passionate kisses upon him. In one nook of the patio he recognized the favorite spot, now unoccupied, of Maratón, the loyal Newfoundland dog, who was so sullen with others, and so docile and affectionate with him, and could vision those large eyes out of which shone an almost human tenderness.

He remembered how, while he would play with the dog, his mother would entertain herself by throwing down to him white roses from the bush which, scaling the walls, wound itself in and out among the banisters of the little balcony. Now all was solitude, all was forsaken, silent, only in the stone

basin the water continued to murmur in notes of muffled sadness.

Two loud knocks resounded upon the door. Roberto went down. It was Montellano, whose body darkened the vestibule with its bulk. He wore a costly new overcoat which still revealed the creases of its Parisian package, a shining silk hat which had not yet conformed to the shape of his head; around his neck a silk handkerchief secured by a solid gold pin, and on his feet the same shoes that he had worn during the voyage, stained with gray cakes of mud.

As Montellano advanced his daughter became visible; she was dressed in black. Roberto felt a deep pleasure at meeting once more the traveling guest of *El Consuelo*, and he admired anew those deeply expressive eyes that shone from out of the black lace shawl.

"Señorita . . . Señor don Ramón, I was waiting for you."

While Montellano walked on without further ceremony, Roberto offered his hand to Dolores as they mounted the staircase, which she ascended with a firm step, with a certain triumphant air, and a flash of determination in her eyes.

"The house is a solid structure," commented Montellano, panting from the effort of the ascent, in the meantime striking right and left with his cane, so powerfully that the wall was defaced. They entered the hall, and Montellano, stumbling against the furniture and the scattered portraits, made his way to the windows, which he opened noisily. A flood of light inundated the salon. Dolores, tingling with curiosity, flitted hither and thither, sinking her heels into the thick carpet, gazing into the mirrors that sent back her enlarged image from greenish depths, as if from the bottom of a lake; stroking the damask of the red hangings with delight, passing her palms across the scarlet brocade of the chair backs; at length she sank into the high armchair and from her seat, with child-like wonder she admired the long row of portraits that seemed to follow her with that same acute, penetrating glance that Roberto had noticed when he first looked upon them.

"Papa, how rare and old all of this is," said Dolores. "Did you buy this, too? How could the women ever have sat in such high chairs as these?"



"I'm going to fill the place with completely new furniture, and none of these faded curtains, either," continued Montellano. "I'll have everything lined with velvet. This place looks like a sacristy and makes you afraid to talk loud in it. But I'll buy it, lock, stock and barrel." And turning to Roberto, who, was biting his lips impatiently and nervously:

"Friend Avila, will you sell it to me?"

Roberto had been noting how ill Montellano's body, which seemed to have been hewn out with an ax, harmonized with this seigniorial environment of faded and soft objects; his brick-colored face; his stentorian voice, habituated to the immensity of the plains and the solitude of the woods; his brusque movements; his way of carrying himself, and his heavy breathing; his rustic gestures. His feet, accustomed to moving freely amid stones and tree-trunks, put his shoes out of shape; his hairy hand, as it pointed to various objects, clutched and brandished a huge cane.

"Let's proceed to another room," suggested Roberto.

And ascending and descending staircases, opening leather screens; passing through many doorways, some very narrow and others very wide, crossing dark passageways, running here and there about the dismantled and deserted dwelling, they went from room to room.

"Here," observed Montellano, "is where I can have my office; there must be more light; your rooms can be over here. This window must be changed, the banister must be removed, the wide corridor must have windows set into the wall . . . h'm . . . h'm . . . this is going to cost a fortune."

They left the top floor and descended to the garden, which was of ample dimensions.

Montellano, with his face turned toward the wall, his arms spread so as to hold the cane at both ends, was engrossed in walking along the wall, taking its measure.

"One, two, three . . . six, . . . eight . . . ten."

In the meantime Roberto and Dolores were walking amid the rose bushes.

She danced happily along the garden paths, as if in her element, admiring the flowers, plucking some, expanding her nostrils with delight to inhale deeply the scent of the pinks. At times she felt a tug at her skirt or at her mantilla, and

with eyes that betokened terror, while her lips parted in laughter, she cast her glance and her body backward, as Roberto released her from the clutches of some rose-bush which, like a lover, seemingly desired to detain her.

In the flower-beds there is a profusion of awkward malvarosa stems, crowned by flowers of a luminous red; old rose-bushes with shrub-like trunks, green leaves and purple shoots; white lilies, geraniums that glow like burning coals, floating in waves of foliage; clumps of pinks, fuchsias that hang like large drops of blood, lilies like alabaster vases; and on the ground, overflowing the beds, the milky furrows of the lilacs. Above the flowers leans an evergreen papaw-tree and an orange-tree, whose leaves are dimmed and stiffened by cobwebs.

"Why, look, papa! There are even medicinal plants here: alder, balm-gentle, mint, sweet-basil."

Don Ramón, impassive, speaking to himself, continued to take measurements with his cane, and wrote down numbers upon his shirt-cuffs.

"We'll have to cut down all this rubbish. I'm going to transfer the staircase to the center, and add two shops extending to the rear of the house. I'll speak to Doctor Karlonoff about it; he's an engineer that was highly recommended to me by Doctor Alcón."

"And this darling rose-bush that winds about the balcony!" exclaimed Dolores, enchanted.

At the edge of the garden-wall there arose, clutching at all the cracks, the stems of an old rose-bush that twined its branches around the banisters of a high balcony and covered the frame with a leafy pavilion. Against the dark green background stood out, like a constellation, Castilian roses, so pale that they seemed to be dying of homesickness. As the wind breathed upon them, they shuddered with a feminine tremor and exhaled from their snow-white chalices an aristocratic aroma, an aroma that seemed to come from bygone centuries. Roberto stepped forward, plucked a few roses and offered them to Montellano's daughter.

"These roses," he explained, "have a history all their own. In the seventeenth century there came from Castile, Doña Agueda de León, the wife of the Judge de Avila; the Spanish lady was grieved to leave her native land, and in remembrance

of it brought along a branch of this rose-bush, which she watered most carefully during the long sea-voyage; she planted it here, and when it had grown, the greatest solace for her longing lay in her breathing the perfume of these flowers, in which she breathed the perfume of her fatherland. On the anniversaries of her marriage she would adorn herself with bouquets of these flowers. When she died they covered her with her cherished roses."

"What an interesting tale!"

"As the house and the rose-bush now belong to you," added Roberto, his face clouding with sadness, "you acquire the right to wear the Castilian roses on your bridal veil." Dolores blushed, fixing her large dark eyes upon him; she smiled, sought for a reply, but remained silent.

During all this, Montellano kept wandering about the garden, making his calculations in a loud voice, taking measurements with long, even strides. He struck to right and to left, scattering flowers all about.

"This thing is in the way," he said, approaching the rose-bush, and through force of habit as a former mountain cutter he frowned, held his breath, stepped back, clutched the handle of the cane and struck the rose-bush a formidable blow.

The stem quivered, revealing a wide gash; the branches creaked gloomily, the twigs trembled, balanced in the air, as if a sensation of pain had coursed through their veins, and a rain of white petals descended upon Dolores and Roberto.

Roberto, after staring at the coarse fellow with the concentrated anger and scorn of ten generations, concealed his emotion with a dry, guttural laugh.

"Here you have your bridal veil already, and all of Castilian roses," he exclaimed, softening his voice and turning to the maiden.

"Papa, this rose-bush is mine and I wish to keep it. Nobody must take it away," she added, with imperious voice and manner.

Roberto, bowing, thanked her and hastily took his leave.

Reaching the vestibule he paused, undecided; before tearing himself forth from the place he wished to look for the last time upon the patio of the paternal house. There came to him, like a voice bidding farewell, the friendly plaint of the water

in the basin that seemed to be lamenting the desertion of its masters.

In the street his eyes fell upon the family escutcheon, chiselled out over the entrance. On the stone, decayed and weatherbeaten, he could make out the old inscription: *Glory and Grief.*

## CHAPTER VII

### CASTILIAN ROSES

IN her little sewing-room, where everything is spick and span, seated upon a low leather chair, Doña Ana is knitting with two steel needles that meet and cross like fencing foils. Every time she pulls at the yarn the ball on the floor jumps, and a cat lying under the chair catches at the skein of wool. Through the window, a slanting ray of the setting sun comes to illumine that countenance which is covered with a pallor of suffering,—a deep, resigned, ineradicable sadness,—and reveals, against the dark material of her clothes and the gloom of the room, two white patches: the satin of her hands and the silver of her hair. Opposite the chair, in a Florentine frame, is the Dolorosa by Carlo Dolce. Elsewhere on the wall hangs a pendulum clock, which with its tick-tock has marked the passing of a few happy hours and of many sad ones. Upon the various tables and on the wall there keep company with Doña Ana objects that are insignificant to a stranger, but which speak an intimate language to her, crystallizing several distinct epochs of her life. From a faded daguerreotype her husband, who has been dead for twenty years, smiles at her. There, beneath a convex glass, is the lock of hair given by her when she was his sweetheart; a black, lustrous lock which to-day, feeling her youth so remote and long accustomed to combing her gray hair, she considers as having been cut from another person altogether. Nearer, between two miniatures of eighteenth-century Spanish dames that stand pompously out from the polished ivory, is the photograph of Roberto, taken at the time of his first communion: a picture now yellow with age, with the features dimmed, showing clearly only the two black spots of a pair of staring, affectionate eyes.

At intervals, in an ecstasy of grief, Doña Ana would with infinite tenderness let her gaze rest upon the picture of Elisa, her daughter who had died at the age of eighteen; it was the portrait that Alejandro had had painted in Paris by a Hungarian artist, Mme. Parthagy; against the gray background the brush had represented the girl's bust amid a glow of melancholy light; in her face the artist had combined the maiden's inner, delicate feeling for moral beauty with the harmonies of form; she had expressed with almost religious emotion the sweetness of that face, upon which adolescence and suffering had at the same time impressed their seal; over the delicate lineaments, over the chaste forehead, floated a delicate pallor; from her deep eyes there seemed to issue a dimmed splendor that radiated to all the lines of the chaste portrait.

The thoughts that passed through Doña Ana's mind at that moment harmonized with the somber tints of the afternoon; she saw about her the canvases that had been discolored by the years, here and there touched by the beam of the setting sun,—portraits of the beloved departed, the scattered remnants of a greatness that had crumbled to ruin, all that had been and that was now no longer. In her mourning soul there commingled the past that had gone and this afternoon that was dying, vanishing in the same dusk.

The last beams of the sun are caught against the gilded carvings of a table and the projecting edges of a frame. The ashes of the afternoon fall upon the earth, and there come the quivering tones of a bell. This mystic, plangent voice that goes flying from belfry to belfry, fills the room with sonorous melancholy and inundates the old woman in waves of sadness. It is like a requiem for the dead that remain unburied in her heart. The clangor of the bells seem to forecast for her a fate marked by ineluctable sorrow.

Through the window, which permits entrance to the dying light, come the noises of the city, muffled by the distance.

She cast her glance into the irrevocable past; the decisive scenes of her life lived anew. That day on which, at Gustavo's side, fluttering with bashfulness, upon the steps of the altar, covered with her nuptial veil, she had seen through the gauze, as through a dream, the shining candles and the white orange-blossoms. . . . Then there arose out of the past the

days during which, at the side of a cradle, she had kissed the satin skin of a baby boy. Afterwards,—what a night was that, good God!—the first night of widowhood, a night of horror, a black night in which the flames of four candles, tormented by an icy wind, illumined from time to time a yellow countenance and two closed eyes. . . . And she thought that life is composed of three pieces of cloth: a bridal veil, swaddling clothes, and a shroud.

Then came her long widowhood, financial straits, struggle, the sale of her estate, her anxiety over the future of her two children, the concentration of all her love upon Roberto and Elisa. . . . Ah, Elisa, so sweet, so beautiful on the night she made her *début* at the ball: the bouquet of Castilian roses in her blue corsage; her elegant simplicity as she crossed the grand salon, and suddenly, in that very place, the look of death in her eyes. . . . Then days of anguish and hope; her lingering agony . . . those drizzly afternoons in which the physician, Doctor Agüeros, shaking his head, and speaking half words, with his ceremonious circumspection and his professional condolence, told her that the illness was incurable,—that it was heart-trouble, that treacherous family ailment of the Avilas. . . . And on top of this awful blow, that absence,—that other solitude, the absence of Roberto, the trip to Europe, in search of health, to consult Doctor Laplace. . . . Then the return, ah! . . . Always that panting breath, the dark rings around her eyes, the seal of an incurable disease!

She let her head fall upon her bosom; the needles dropped into her lap; her hands, thinned by years of anxious strain, crossed; from her lips, which scarcely moved with a fervent tremor, issued a prayer toward her who was also a mother, and who likewise wept the misfortunes of her son.

“For him, most sacred Virgin.”

And from that Dolorosa hanging on the wall, her companion through life, there wafted to the forehead resting upon her palms a feeling of resignation, of tranquillity, of consolation.

She remained thus for a long time amid the silence and the dying light. Then from the darkness of her thoughts rose a light, a dim ray of hope: the house had been sold; that very afternoon Roberto had surrendered it. But from

the sale there remained a considerable portion that would allow them to purchase shares in the great enterprise. She must dispel all anxiety; General Ronderos had approved her course, with all the interest of his affection, with all the weight of his experience. Within a short time their fortune would have been won back. All uncertainties, anguish and poverty would be at an end. . . . As she gave herself up to her dreams there came to Doña Ana scenes that sent a quiver of joy through that heart which was so unaccustomed to happiness. . . . She was in her old dwelling. . . . Roberto and Inés were walking in the garden, and she, from above, was throwing Castilian roses down upon them; the couple sent her a look beaming with infinite tenderness and supreme happiness. . . . Ah! The complete realization of her happy dreams required the success of the enterprise; peace. . . . Would there be peace? Fear of war was already in the air! Her hopes languished, and the smiling light that had arisen in the dark gloom of her thoughts was extinguished.

The final reflections of the sunset had also disappeared; she was engulfed in darkness; night had conquered . . . the white of the curtains, the design on the walls and even the pale forehead of Elisa's portrait faded into an all-embracing darkness.

She was about to burst into sobbing and ease her soul with tears; but habituated to silence, Doña Ana sighed only inwardly. . . .

"Are you there, mother dear?"

For some time Roberto, standing silent upon the threshold, had stopped to control himself and give his voice that merry ring which he invariably assumed in the presence of his mother. He had just transferred the house; his hands were filled with Castilian roses, which he had just picked. He had intended to throw them into his mother's lap as soon as he caught sight of her, but no sooner had he entered than his resolution abandoned him and he tried to discountenance the sadness of the occasion with some jolly trifle.

"Mother, the opera company gives its first performance to-night. We'll subscribe for a box, won't we? . . . It will be great fun."

And he coughed slightly.

But Doña Ana, hearing his words, which he had tried to utter in a natural tone, was not deceived. Roberto's voice was veiled, half broken; his cough had betrayed the effort he had made to conceal his emotions; from the scent of the Castilian roses that had scattered through the room she could guess what had just happened: the transfer of the house, the farewell to those corners so rich in intimate recollections . . . the rose-bush! . . . Ah! Her poor, beloved Roberto had brought her those roses, the last ones, to place upon Elisa's grave.

"Subscribe? Of course, my son. It will be very enjoyable . . . ever so much."

Roberto knew that his mother had been waiting for him; he heard her commonplace remark and understood that these words had come from lips still trembling with prayer, from a throat still choked by a sob. There was a brief silence, which Roberto hastened to interrupt:

"Very well. . . . Let's make particularly sure of attending la Rondinelli's benefit . . . a genuine artist. . . ."

He meant to continue, but he saw that he would betray his feelings,—that his voice was failing him; he grew silent . . . he now regretted having brought the roses; he did not dare to give them to her; they would arouse in his mother an entire epoch of the past: his father,—Elisa; she would conceive the idea of taking these flowers to Elisa's grave. He had not thought that at this hour, in such a state of mind, this bouquet of flowers would reach the memories and the griefs hidden at the bottom of her soul, and produce an outburst. . . . He tried to retreat in silence.

"I knew," said Doña Ana, "Rosina and Mirándola. . . ."

Roberto succeeded in mastering himself once more, forced a laugh, and continued to speak, telling of the arrival of the chorus at *El Consuelo*; the incidents of the trip; and as he spoke he drew nearer to her, seeking her in the gloom. An aroma of tenderness, delicate as the aroma of bygone centuries, wafted through the room. Doña Ana felt the silky petals falling upon her, while he felt the old woman's fingers clutch him convulsively, and the moisture of two tears. He let go of the last roses, and gropingly, in an unwonted impulse of affection, he sought his mother's head, took it in his hands, bent over and pressed upon her lips a long, mute kiss. In



the touch of her lips he could feel the unrevealed bitterness and anguish which tormented that mind; he felt that the bond of affection and grief, which united those two souls, had become stronger and tighter than ever.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BALLAD OF DESPAIR

THE spacious dining-room of the *Hotel Bicontinental* resounds with the footsteps of the servants who are making the final preparations for the banquet organized by González Mogollón in honor of Landáburo, and also for the purpose of celebrating the union of the *íntegros* and the *revaluadores*. The waiters bustle about the table, place in succession upon it the menus, the buttonhole flowers, the fruit baskets, the cards with the names of the guests; they hang festoons upon the walls, place above the two doors to the room trophies, banners, and wreaths displaying gold-lettered signs alluding to the function. The two newspapers representing and acting as spokesman for the two organizations to meet in the dining-room that night, have sent two huge wreaths: *La Integridad*, *La Revaluación*.

Montellano and Dolores, as they came to the main dining-room, were detained by a servant who informed them that a special room had been prepared for guests that evening.

"What's the reason?" asked Montellano, as he crossed the resplendent main dining-room and went in quest of the table that had been prepared for him and Dolores in an adjacent compartment.

"Because to-night they're giving a banquet to chief Landáburo," answered the attendant. "He's what you call a real friend of the people."

Montellano and his daughter seated themselves and stared with surprise and curiosity into the grand salon, at the long, glittering table that awaited the guests; they could make out the plates and the covers, the bouquets of flowers, colored dishes containing raisins and almonds, and the loaves of bread in napkins that were knotted like white lilies. Clusters of electric lights sent streams of light that drew sparks from the

nickel of the salt-cellars and the caps of the demijohns, covering the tablecloth with clear, dark shadows. The confusion of footsteps and the creaking of the waiters' shoes make one feel at times that the floor is weak and has given way. From outside come the sound of footfalls upon a brick paving, commands uttered in a French accent, the clatter of cutlery and plates.

In the gloomy corridor that leads to the door of the waiters' room, the proprietor of the hotel paces back and forth with the air of a general on the eve of battle. His massive body and his canine countenance give him a great resemblance to Sánchez Méndez, the head of the *íntegros*, the most conspicuous personage of the political banquet.

Montellano continued to converse with the attendant, asking him about the details of the banquet; his loud voice, too voluminous for the room in which he was, filled the adjoining compartments.

Alejandro, Roberto and Bellegarde came in; Montellano arose to greet Alejandro and Roberto as if they were old friends, but they merely nodded and took a distant table. Roberto's face betrayed traces of worry; he looked wan and pale. Dolores cast a tender glance in his direction; whereupon the mists of sadness rose from Roberto's countenance and he came over to Dolores, uttering a few gallant remarks. Later, during the meal, Dolores' black eyes and Roberto's brown ones kept up a continuous dialogue.

Bellegarde was content to observe Alejandro attentively: that face whose outline was more pleasing than correct, looked like a sketch, but a sketch drawn by a master's brush; the fair, golden hair, the full and sensuous lips, the ample, vigorous forehead, which seemed to be surrounded by a halo of enthusiasm; the eyes of cold blue, which at times acquired a tender tone and at others flashed with a gleam of madness, as he spoke of art, of the past, of fame; at such times his words were ardent and his voice quivered. He had been endowed by nature with the gift of admiration, of intense feeling, of communicating his faith and his enthusiasm.

A burst of laughter that poured forth like silvery notes, and a stentorian voice, announced la Rondinelli and the tenor of the Italian opera company.

The profuse light illuminated the correct profile of the prima donna and threw a soft, gold glint over her silken tresses.

The ill-garbed, perspiring musicians were filing into the banquet salon. Carefully they placed upon the floor their black violin cases, drew their flutes from their cases and their clarinets from the cloth bags.

They took seats far from the increasing buzz of conversation. Somewhat later the guests descended upon the place; they wore a solemn air, whispered mysterious sentences into one another's ears, stifled outbursts of laughter, and exchanged affectionate words; amid the suppressed conversation they wandered around the table, stooped down in search of their places and drew the chairs apart, scraping them noisily along the floor. The orchestra burst into the march *Broken Fetters*, words by the maestro Mata, and dedicated expressly to Landáburo. Dolores, who from her table was following all the details of the banquet with intense curiosity, gazed at the row of white shirt-fronts bent over the plates of soup, the huge pink in Landáburo's buttonhole; the tight frock coat and the high collar that were torturing Doctor Alcón; the immense red bald-head and the multifarious gestures of González Mogollón; Mata's yellowish complexion and his ghastly glance; Doctor Agüero's spectacles, which flashed with the affected movements of his head. After the silence that accompanies the soup and the fish, the conversation grew livelier, and there came to Dolores, through the footsteps of the waiters and the clatter of the plates, fragments of the guests' conversation:

"The white-hour of a near future. . . ." "Revaluation or chaos. . . ." "Half the nation enslaved. . . ."

"They ate in the triclinium and then proceeded to the vomitorium, as Juvenal says. . . ."

"Conciliation of extremes . . . universal embrace . . . enforced salvation . . . practical idea . . . from the religious standpoint."

"Oyster soup . . . pearl, illness of the oyster . . . the pearl, an illness, like genius. . . ."

"Doctor Charcot, my professor at la Salpêtrière . . . the idea? a product just like this wine."

"Crass ignorance . . . unpardonable errors. . . . My historic refutations. . . ."

At the head of the table bulged the corpulent figure of Doctor Sánchez Méndez, who, in silence, bent over his plate, gulped down the oyster soup with keen relish. From where she sat Dolores could make out only his huge head, bristling like a brush above his white shirt.

The news of the banquet, the music and the unusual illumination that lighted up the street had attracted a crowd of curiosity seekers; some political friends of the hero of the occasion, headed by Socarraz, had pressed around the entrance, their brows arched and their necks stretched forward, ready to hail, to applaud and to scatter upon the four winds the precious words of "Chief Landáburo."

The hush of the commencement was followed by general merriment; the voices grew louder, toasts were given, glasses clinked; as a result of a sated appetite, frequent libations, the light reflected in the mirrors, the guests grew rapidly expansive and talkative, gushing about "universal brotherhood" according to González Mogollón's desires. That worthy, who was always anxious to make rapid headway, thought it the psychological moment for his purpose, and arose to state the purpose of the banquet. He had the orchestra silenced and began to speak. As he did so, he scattered drops of red wine over the tablecloth. He confessed his poor oratorical gifts, and made a distinction between the religious and secular way of doing things; he did not like to speak about himself; he served only to save humanity and to do good among all the classes of society. He knew that it was the custom not to offer toasts until after dessert, when champagne was being served; but he had permitted himself the liberty of taking the floor during the carving of the pigeons because that was the kind of fellow he was; and who—he added—as a soldier of the Fatherland, did it more because of his anxiety for harmony than because he had organized this banquet, which was to effect the union of the *Integridad* club, whose president was Sánchez Méndez, and the *Revaluación*, presided over so brilliantly and astoundingly by General Landáburo.

Roberto, Alejandro and Bellegarde, keenly interested in politics insofar as it affected general peace were following the course of the banquet with deep curiosity and commenting upon the various incidents.

"This Doctor Mogollón who has just finished talking," said the Count, "strikes me as a man of excellent intentions. His desires for the conciliation of the two parties could not be more patriotic; he's working for peace, no doubt."

"For war," interrupted Roberto. "What he's after is to rehabilitate Landábuero, who has lost ground since his recent defeats, and is detested and fallen in prestige even among his best friends. . . . Landábuero, was, is, and will always be, an agitator, a revolutionist."

"But, how is it, then," asked Bellegarde, in surprise, "that Doctor Alcón, Doctor Sandoval y Sabogal, important government employees, should be present?"

"I'll explain that," offered Alejandro, "although it's not an easy matter. At the beginning of his political career Alcón attained public office by supporting the government; but, being a clever fellow, he afterwards saw that he would advance more rapidly in the opposing camp, and he began to write in *La Integridad*, attacking the government, especially in its financial affairs; and general Ronderos, when he took charge of that department, asked the President to have Doctor Alcón be given the post of under-secretary so that he might review all his acts."

"As for Karlonoff," concluded Roberto, "his entrance into the *La Integridad* group is of more recent date; only a few days ago he was swinging the censer and chanting dithyrambs to General Ronderos. To-day I learned that after the minister signed the contract with you, thus flouting the counsel of the consulting engineer, he made a bee line for the office of Doctor Sánchez Méndez, the head of the *íntegros*, gave him a tight hug, placed himself under Méndez's orders, swearing eternal war against Ronderos, because he believes Ronderos lost."

"So that," observed Bellegarde, "if the union of these two elements is effected, peace may be endangered."

"No!" replied Alejandro, in a firm voice and with resolute gesture. "No; for General Ronderos is in the war ministry and he will conquer these obstacles as he's conquering all others, with an inexorable hand."

"Pardon me, but I don't understand politics very well. . . . Roberto has told me that at one time Señor Sánchez Méndez and General Ronderos were close friends, and that they helped

to establish the present order of things. . . . Why do not the friends of each attempt a reconciliation, an understanding between the two?"

"Understanding? Agreement? Sánchez itches for power and will hear of no other arrangement than being given a free hand."

Montellano shot penetrating glances in the direction of that group of important politicians who sooner or later were to serve him in his manipulations.

In the banquet salon the merry strains of the orchestra resounded anew.

Then there began a conversation upon Nietzsche's system and Mata's poetry. Landáburu began to feel that uneasiness which always troubled him when he occupied a secondary place in the attention of the public.

"Señor González," he blurted, "will you be so kind as to have them bring me my raw meat?" He paused to note the effect of his words, awaiting the question, *Why raw?* But nobody heeded him, so he explained of his own accord:—"You see, I got used to it during my last campaign, and I must prepare for the next."

Despite everything, the conversation continued to revolve about Nietzscheism.

Doctor Agüeros then discoursed, in his affected way, about the homoplasy of gray matter, on the ubiquity of sensation, upon telepathy and upon the theory of mental suggestion advanced by his unforgettable Charcot.

"My dear Mata," queried González Mogollón, "why so sad? Why so silent? Why do you deprive us of the gems of your genius? Why, with your forthcoming volume *My Pentateuch*, you have already acquired an important political standing."

Mata, with his sunken eyes and his silent manner, looked more cadaverous than ever.

"A verse, poet," shouted Landáburu to him. "Poetry is the sister of liberty. . . . Give us a tear from your oppressed Polish heart."

The poet seemed to awake; the conversations and the urgings continued; Mata bowed, brought out his little morphine needle, raised the cuff of his coat and without being noticed applied an

injection. At once he straightened up, aflame with inspiration. . . .

"Give me a theme! . . ."

"This carnation," suggested Landáburo.

"Then give me four rhymes, whatever you wish. I accept the theme: the red carnation is suggestive. . . . You will see the poem in my next volume, *Red Lines*."

"Here you have your four rhymes," said Landáburo, passing him the menu, upon the back of which was written: "*Utrajadas* . . . *lirio* . . . *desolladas* . . . *martirio* . . ."

The poet's face assumed an inspired expression, he passed his hand across his perspiring forehead, and over his romantic locks as if in the agony of a painful travail, looked at the table, the wall, and into infinity . . . and suddenly burst forth, with the pink in his hand:

"BLOOD STAIN, for my forthcoming volume *Red Line*.

No tiene las blancuras de auroras ultrajadas,  
No tiene los pudores anémicos del lirio,  
Ni el viejo Azul. . . . Es rojo cual carnes desolladas  
Que sienten la sublime neurosis del martirio."

(It has not the white of ultra dawns, nor the anemic modesty of the lily, nor the old blue. . . . It is as red as torn flesh that feels the sublime neurosis of martyrdom.)

"Bravo!" shouted Landáburo.—"My flower! It has been consecrated by art. . . . A stupendous stanza. Let it not be overlooked in the *Banquet Review*."

Roberto, from his place, said to his friend:

"Frankly, it would be hard to do better in four lines."

The regular popping of the champagne resounded.

All turned to Doctor Sánchez Méndez, expecting him to speak, but he excused himself definitively, asking Doctor Alcón to take his place; but the latter, after having blushed with the purple of learned modesty, excused himself, likewise alleging his well-known incompetence, his ignorance, his lack of experience in speaking before the public.

"They don't wish to compromise themselves," said Roberto. "They eat but they don't orate. They do as the Englishmen's mosquito: they eat but they don't sing."

Doctor Agüeros, who was very fond of speech-making and declaiming, arose unbidden, adjusted his spectacles, smoothed his long shocks of hair, and with a mellifluous voice and exquisite refinement, began:

"Those in charge of the government, empirical physicians, have given to the invalid a poison which kills slowly; in ten years of peace they have galvanized him; with fleeting convulsions of ephemeral activity they have filled his veins with a strange blood: depreciated currency! Can you not hear the voice of the anguishing land demanding at the top of its lungs the suppression of the injection? The evil must be attacked where it exists, and the remedy must be applied *loco doliente*, to the wound itself; cataplasmic emollients must be placed upon the rapid inflammation produced by the repellent political measures of the prevailing constitution. Against this official treatment my fellow partisans, some ten years ago, rebelled in a struggle that has my admiration; but as they did not win out, I recognize that the system of liberal bleedings did not produce the desired result for our cause. Let us to-day apply a different treatment: if, having been tried by various doctors, a proposed remedy for an evil is proved to be ineffective, tending rather to aggravate the evil, it is empiricism, it is blindness, to persist in applying it; it attests, at any rate, scant inventiveness. Let us seek another remedy in political therapeutics. Gentlemen, here's to conciliation!"

As he concluded, voices were heard:

"Let Landáburo speak."

Karlonoff, intercepting Landáburo, arose.

"Gentlemen, we are in dire need of real men, and it is great honor for me to raise this glass in greeting to two celebrities of the highest worth, Doctor Sánchez Méndez and General Landáburo. I greet particularly, and as my adversary of yesterday, the latter, in this epoch that so greatly lacks men capable of dominating the times and the field by means of vast conceptions worthy of a Hannibal or a Napoleon, despite their contradictions and errors of a military nature; despite my efforts to spread in this country the knowledge and the study of military science and the art of war, little attention has been devoted to them up to the present; all our military men have been committing capital errors, seeking the worst lines of retreat; the first of all,



Bolívar, generally called the Liberator; the mulatto Piar was a thousandfold superior to him, even as the Pinzóns were superior to Columbus, for Bolívar never had a fixed plan of campaign, and his leadership was null, fatal, if not downright disgraceful. General Landáburu is beloved because he is the father of his soldiers,—pardon me this digression,—while Bolívar made a needless sacrifice of his armies, which he formed with iron-like tenacity, like the Indian who, during his people's festive occasions, gambles away at *bisbis* or *chirombolo*, the ten or twelve golden *reales* that represent the toil of an entire week."

Stifled laughter was heard, and murmurs of disapproval; some of the guests were whispering to one another, paying no attention to Karlonoff's toast. The latter went on:

"I speak without beating about the bush, for history knows neither friends nor parties; many pseudo-historians, perhaps not so much through bad faith as through ignorance, have distorted these facts; but I, in my *Refutations*, have solemnly given them the lie, for they are merely plagiarists who speak of matters without understanding them. Gentlemen, let us raise this same glass in toast to *La Revaluación* and to *La Integridad*; let us embrace and welcome General Landáburu who, just as Doctor Sánchez is the pen, will be the sword of our side. Here's to General Landáburu, who did not commit Bolívar's errors, impelled by the ambition of entering the capitals and being hailed as Liberator."

"Enough! Enough!"

"Let Landáburu have the floor," shouted some in indignation, and Karlonoff was forced to sit down. Landáburu had entrusted Socarraz with having a photograph of him taken as he arose to speak, and for this reason was especially concerned with his pose, his appearance and the gesture that he already could behold printed in the papers, the almanacs and on the cigarette packages.

As Landáburu prepared to speak, there rippled along the tables, from the reserved salon to the end of the dining-room, a tremor of expectation, swelling to a buzz of admiration.

"Shh! The General is going to speak. . . . Chief Landáburu."

Proud to be the target of all eyes, and flattered to see what a crowd had gathered in the doorway of the dining-room, Landáburo arose confidently, ready for the photographer; to give proof of his coolness, he placed a glass to one side, arranged his pink, swept the assembly in a circular glance and burst forth in his trumpet-like voice:

"I devote my wandering and fecund life, hour by hour and minute by minute, to the service of Liberty. I am still covered with the dust of the road; I was unable to change attire."

"Bravo! . . ." clamored the crowd.

"I have only this moment removed my boots and spurs. . . ."

"Bravo!"

"Bravissimo!"

"What talent!"

". . . and spurs, and I scarcely had time to pluck in gardens of Casiano this beautiful, symbolic pink which stands for the fire with which we should advance the revaluation of ideals,—the color of the blood that we shed to the last drop, when we plunged ardently into conflict with the party supporting the prevailing constitution."

"No mention of blood," interrupted González earnestly. "Conciliation is the word!"

". . . And this pink symbolizes, too, the raw meat upon which we fed, when, in our battle for revaluation and fraternity, we preferred the wandering, battling existence of the vast pampas, free of trammels and laws, rifle in hand and anger in the socket, to the fate of conforming to the intellectual tortures and above all, the material ones, of peace, and to the politics of the Swiss and the closed door. For this reason my enemies called me the revolutionary Marat; a better comparison would be that with Lafayette, for once conquered, my soul is overcome with generosity. If I am at all famous, it is not because I seek glory everywhere through my speeches, but because of the talent of my fellow citizens, who discover merit wherever it exists.

"I confess that there are many revolutionary leaders who feed their vanity by rejecting this conciliation and wrap themselves in the toga of the recalcitrant. Not I; I come to deprecate legal strife; I, who have given to my cause all that a man can

give; I, I who have faced the torrents of the sky and the torrents of bullets, and who have during the past ten years confronted the sufferings of peace.

"Instead of blood, let us make flow in torrents the fertilizing water of discussion. As I said in my speech at *El Consuelo*, to the Revaluation party, to Colombia, to all Spanish America: *In our soldiers' knapsacks let us place not cartridges but fruits for export*. I believe that both the lower and the higher spheres of the Administration will be grateful to me for that slogan. The men of the Constitution have everywhere conquered us, and have imposed upon the country ten years of peace, thus proving to us our incapability of waging war. Fate has been unkind to us, and has gone over to the enemy bag and baggage. We have taken the wrong road; but as Mr. Bristol, the Archbishop of Chicago, says: 'What matters it that man sins from time to time!'"

"Landáburo," said Roberto to his friends, "has just accomplished what can be done only by popes and garrotes . . . he has made a cardinal, for in Chicago there is no cardinal, to my knowledge."

"Gentlemen," continued Landáburo, "I have demonstrated my love for peace, for liberty, but I cannot conclude without showing my love for the people and proclaiming some of my theories for the betterment of its condition."

"Long live the friend of the people!" shouted Socarraz; and the crowd behind him, which had invaded the salon, took up the cry.

"That a man should enjoy the fruit of his toil is an accepted fact; but what must not be tolerated is the amassing of those great fortunes that insult the poor; all capital exceeding ten thousand dollars should be divided among the people."

And as he spoke he pointed to Montellano who, seated opposite the speaker, in the special dining-room, flared up with rage.

"And it is neither just nor legitimate," resumed the orator, "that these vast fortunes should be transmitted through inheritance, for these legacies result in the laziness of the heir and in all the vices engendered by idleness. Why in this very

place, to go no further, we have a man whose income is almost equal to that of the nation."

Montellano and Dolores left. In the salon the acclamations continued to resound.

"Bravo!"

"Sublime!"

"Long live the republican revindicator!"

"Long life to the friend of the people!"

The crowd, like a huge wave, had inundated the salon; frock coats mingled with jackets, guests were merged with spectators, and enthusiasm could be read upon every countenance.

There were embraces, handclaps, tears, clinking of glasses, exchange of tender sentiments, toasts from everybody to every conceivable thing.

"Here's to friendship!"

"To peace!"

"To my wife Juliana!"

"To the Republic. . . .!"

"To the Latin race in America!"

"To Angelita and the babies!"

"To humanity!"

"To Tubalcain Cardoso . . . the great absent one!"

"To Dante!"

"To Perucho!"

"To this!"

"To that!"

The general expansiveness, universal brotherhood and tenderness had reached their height. González Mogollón, deeply moved, with his bellowing voice dominated the din,—that oceanic tumult:

"It's a great success. . . . This union is due to me . . . there will be peace for twenty years. . . . I'll wager my neck. . . ." And placing his glass upon the table, he passed his finger across his prominent Adam's apple as if slashing his neck.

Karlonoff was going from group to group trying to continue his interrupted speech: "The ineptitude and the ridiculous tactics of Bolívar came to such a pass, that . . ."

Socarraz, half tipsy, scattering an odor of brandy, and

taking advantage of this opportunity to mingle with important personages, was meandering from group to group, ordering the servants to fetch champagne aplenty; he clasped everybody's hand; he was profuse with enthusiastic words in favor of Landáburu Sánchez Méndez, and Alcón; all at once he discovered the dining-room in which were Bellegarde and Alejandro; he summoned an attendant imperiously, ordered him to procure a bottle of champagne and made his way with it into the dining-room.

The champagne, his hearty eating and the copious drinking previous to his entrance, had set fire to his face, which was generally of greenish hue.

"Don Alejandro, Don Roberto, Señor Bellegarde, here's a glass to the General, to Doctor Sánchez."— They turned to look at him, but made no reply.

"Señores, here's to reconciliation, to peace."— His voice quivered slightly, the high color of his cheeks faded and was subsiding to green. Roberto pitied the fellow, and desiring to humor him, arose.

"Very well, Escipión, I'll have one with you . . . but leave us."

"And won't the gentlemen join me? "

Bellegarde blinked, Alejandro mastered his feelings, restraining a convulsive movement of his hands.

"Well, since you won't join me," shouted Socarraz, turning to Bellegarde and Alejandro,— "I won't drink either; I don't need to."

And he lowered his glass so violently that the champagne spilled over the tablecloth.

Bellegarde rang the bell; two attendants approached in haste.

"Take this drunkard out of here," he said in his ever even voice, and continued his conversation with Alejandro.

González Mogollón had also drawn near to help prevent a scene.

"Ah! My dear Socarraz, you're a most excellent fellow; . . . calm, now, calm; conciliation, peace. . . ." And he placed his arm on the young man's shoulder.

Socarraz released himself from González, planted himself in front of Bellegarde, darted a furious glance at him through

his squinting eyes, then turned his back bruskiy upon him.

González Mogollón took him by the arm and they left together. González's voice could be heard.

"Calm. . . . Calm, now. . . ."

Bellegarde and his friends withdrew. Sánchez Méndez was much vexed when he learned of the incident between Socarraz and Bellegarde, and feared lest the high spirits produced by the champagne and the invasion of the dining-room by the populace should finally lead to slaps and blows,—a not very promising prologue to the ratification of peace and conciliation. He, too, was a man of refinement, of aristocratic tastes, and only political necessity obliged him to attend such banquets as this, and to mingle with persons like Socarraz and his associates. He had an understanding with González Mogollón.

"Where is the poet Mata? — My dear Mata, let's have some unpublished composition of yours,—the very latest, which you recited at Doña Aura de Cardoso's home and which has created so much comment. . . . What is the name of the poem? . . ."

And he placed his hand upon the poet's shoulder, casting at him through his thick glasses a most good-natured glance. Mata wavered, raised his filmy eyes and replied in a thick voice:

"The ballad of despair."

The crowd was silenced; a wide circle was formed; Mata took his place beside a table.

His asthmatic voice broke at times, becoming hoarser than ever,—a sigh, a mere breath. During the declamation he tried to make vigorous gestures, energetic motions, to assume pathetic poses; he would with great effort straighten up, thrust forth his chest and raise his arm, but at once he would bend over in partial collapse, incline his head, drop his arm as if it were of lead, and then lean against the table, casting his hazy eyes about; his voice would die out, he would grow pale, whereupon with another supreme effort, in a convulsive attempt that shook his entire body, he would raise his head, lift up his arm once more, waver, and pull out the cuffs of his shirt, upon which shone two buttons representing skulls.

"Ballad of despair. . . . From my volume, *The Song of My Songs.*"

## I

Fray Martin of la Cogulla,  
 The prior of Calatrava,  
 Who exhausted all penances, hair shirts, fasts and disciplines, and with  
     books  
     Rent his pale flesh,  
     Castigated his appetites,  
     And with pious  
 Reflexions and readings in missals and breviaries illuminated by the  
     masters,  
     Dominated  
     The passions of body and soul,  
     Soul and body,  
 And was a venerable monk with his long and noble beard,  
     Noble and long,  
     And when he was  
     In the choir,  
 Chanting the renowned sequences before the black lecturn,  
     His figure  
     Illuminated by the beams that the liturgic window-panes  
     Distilled,  
     Shedding with silvery light the fleece  
     Of his beard;  
 In frames that an artificer of Bizantium  
     Had carved,  
 He seemed to be the great Pontiff of Life and Death,  
 The great Pontiff of the Extinct and the Nothingness;  
 And it was thus, with the prestige of his abbatial gold,  
 And the onyx of the choir, and the finely wrought filigrees  
     Of the stole and the amice,  
     Of the cingulum and the alb,  
 And reading from folios which chrysography adorned with its royal  
     lilies, its chimeras and its griffes, the rings of the  
     rattlesnake; the serpents  
     And the gargoyles,  
 And the red and the blacks of the medieval letters,—  
 It was thus that the good monk, of Death and Nothingness,  
     Fray Martin de la Cogulla,  
     Overawed  
 The monks and the worshipers of the dank, dark  
     Calatrava.

## II

One night,  
 One night,  
 At one, at two in the morning,  
 At one,  
 At two,  
 At three in the morning,

## THE BALLAD OF DESPAIR

91

The penitent having been kept awake by the frogs and the rats,  
By the frogs which, in the moats of the convent,

Croaked,

By the rats that gnawed,

That gnawed with their teeth on the edges of the pages  
Of an ancient parchment which, with hinges and keys,  
Related the fame of old Calatrava,  
The good monk, unable to sleep,

Meditated,

Meditated,

Meditated,

And in that gray night, and in the mystic vigil,  
Amid austere penances, and amid the white visions,  
There appeared suddenly, laden with tenderness, fascination, gentleness  
and promises,

Dona Sancha,

Dona Sancha de Almudéjar who once, during the agile tournaments,  
Had crowned the strong and noble Martin.

### III

In the battlemented tower

With its merlons and its arches,

There resounded, with funereal clang, and in a hoarse voice of bronze,  
with three strokes,

The bell,

The bell which, suspended in the night,

Rang out

Its sighs, its plaints,

Its terrors, its prayers,

And the good monk, unable to sleep,

Kept meditating,

And in the gloom of his cell,

All filled with perfumes, with promises, with tenderness, with purity,  
There appeared beside his cot the dominating vision,

The vision of Dona Sancha,

Dona Sancha de Almudéjar, who once, during the agile tournaments,  
Had crowned the strong and noble Martin.

### IV

And out of the darkness

Of the solitary cell

Arose the tormenting recollections of former passionate days,

Of other nights, warm nights, sweet nights, clear nights,

Of balls and tournaments and feasts and merry dins,

In which the beautiful

Dona Sancha

Seemed like a living lotus

Who triumphed

Amid the rhythm of the guzlas and of the stirring trumpets,



Amid the measured clank of the grieves and the helmets and the coats  
of mail,  
    To which  
    The youthful labourers  
    Kept time,  
Passing in measured gait through the august pride of the arches and  
the glory of the proud standards.

## V

He wished to give a grandiose finale to the poem of his deep melancholy;  
He felt the kiss, he felt the touch, he felt the ice of mortal despair. . . .  
    And the good monk,  
    Before the pale  
    Sweet vision,  
    Magic vision,  
    Very softly,  
    Very softly arose,  
    And through long corridors  
    In which the wind moaned,  
Spreading the three strokes, the funereal clang, of the mournful Bell,  
Through the arched cloister, and through patios in which the ray of  
the moon, shedding its shimmering mercury,  
    Cast  
    The long, black shadow,  
    Black and long,  
Of the good monk, the good monk glided along  
    Like a specter,  
    Glided along,  
    Crossed and passed on.

## VI

    And by the alborescent light,  
    The pale light  
Of the dawn which in the infinite, greenish heavens with its rhyming  
canopy, and the silk of its mist  
    Resembled  
    A crystal strophe,  
And in sight of the astonished friars, who were already chanting matins,  
The old penitent, Fray Martin de la Cogulla,  
    Went to the tower, and one stair  
    After the other,  
    And another stair,  
    And another stair,  
    And another stair,  
    He climbed  
    And in the white  
Tower, where a black old beam of decayed wood extended out toward  
the sad asphodels of the dawn,  
With the cord that tightened his waist,

The good friar, crac! hanged himself;  
 And against the lime walls of the tower,  
 Projected in shadows  
 By the gray and silver  
 Beams of the moon,  
 Stretched stiffly  
 The cowl  
 And the gray hair,  
 The fleece  
 Of his beard,  
 And the verterbrae,  
 The serge,  
 And the feet,  
 And the sandals,  
 And the cord,  
 And the gaunt  
 Corpse,  
 All forming  
 A long shadow,  
 A single,  
 Single,  
 Long  
 Shadow.

## CHAPTER IX

## NOSTALGIA FOR DEATH

"WE should have left the place sooner," said Alejandro to his friends, as they crossed Bolívar Square. "In that way we should have avoided the explosion of fraternity and Socarraz's gallantries. . . ."

From the square and the neighboring streets there arose in the darkness a merry, festive din. The crowds were on their way to the theater, anxious to witness the opening performance given by the Italian troupe.

The moon, in the west, escorted by silver-lined clouds, was sailing in an inky ocean. In the east, against a curtain of black velvet there stood out the Cathedral towers. The lights from the carriages flashed by in the darkness like glow-worms.

"I'm very desirous of hearing Massenet's *Werther*; it's the first time the opera is sung in Bogotá."

Before the entrance to the theater, under the electric lights, there is a veritable commotion: carriages coming and going,

amid the clatter of hoofs; others stop, and men and women come forth, the latter scattering perfume in their wake. Dark overcoats, silk wraps, furs, uncovered heads, issue from the shadows, pause in the entrance, glitter in the intense light of the vestibule, and are lost in the semi-darkness of the staircase, as they ascend.

The three friends in their front box are admiring the spectacle: the full house; the perfumes, the buzz of conversation, the flash of the shining shirt-fronts out of the dark recesses of the boxes, the gems sparkling on the white necks. The fluttering of fans, the silken glints, the glitter of jewelry. . . .

"I can't understand," said Roberto, "how they could have made a drama of so simple a plot as Goethe's *Werther*, which is so devoid of action. The theme of the novel is slight: Werther falls in love with Carlotta, who is already betrothed to Albert. She, faithful to her vow, marries her sweetheart. Werther, crushed, commits suicide. The whole matter might be summed up by such a quatrain as the one about Corinne:

"Oswald loved Corinne,  
But he was silly enough  
To give his hand to an Englishwoman,  
And poor Corinne died.

"— But Massenet's skill and success lay precisely in his choice of a simple plot, almost devoid of action, in which there is only one great passion; such a plot suited his inspiration, his disposition and his tendencies better than any other. Drama, musical drama, lives upon action; but that action is internal, moral, arising from deep passions. . . ."

And as this was a theme that attracted Bellegarde, he continued:

"That is how music can become spiritualized, noble, appealing to the spirit, overpowering the soul, scorning to pander to the nerves and to flatter the senses. . . .

"But the selfsame Massenet's *La Navarraise*, which I heard in Paris, has, quite to the contrary, a most violent, agitated plot. . . . The story would have been much to the taste of a certain public hereabouts: the civil war in Spain; clamors, commotion, confusion to the accompaniment of drums, trumpets, shots and cannon booms. . . . The music fairly reeked powder.

"And that's why it was a fiasco. There's an explanation for

it all. Mascagni had just made a striking hit with his *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Massenet wished to write his *Cavalleria*, too; and he included every device that Mascagni had employed: he let the orchestra loose, he overdid the melodies, and lowered his exquisite gifts to the vulgarity of certain Italian methods,—to noisy ensembles, to convulsive phrases that run through the whole scale, to facile contrasts.

“And in this brutal game,—this game of throat-cutting and bullet-firing, Massenet was bested, for he was made to depict the morbid passions, the delicate weakness of Werther. . . .”

The curtain arose.

Bellegarde wiped his monocle and turned toward the stage, where a picturesque scene showed the village of Waldheim.

A beautiful summer morning; amid the peace of nature rises the song of the children; then the waltz movement, the lively motif that announces Carlotta's arrival.

“The musical phrase,” said the Count, “corresponds to the freshness of the village maiden; see how frank and sincere it is; notice its rhythms, so full of originality and joy.”

“I don't know this opera,” said Alejandro. “I doubt very much whether Massenet can have represented, or rather, reflected in music, the soul of Werther; for, if I remember rightly, he was above all passionately fond of nature. This passion, not so much for Carlotta as for nature, is a strange sentiment,—a deep one, and most difficult to express. . . . I doubt . . .”

“—Very well,” replied the Count enthusiastically, and with unwonted spirit seizing Alejandro's arms and bending over the red velvet railing to hear more plainly the voices and the orchestra,—“this, precisely this, is what Massenet has accomplished with poetry, passion,—with the passion of a soul dominated by emotion. . . . Do you hear? Do you hear, Alejandro?” he added, pressing his friend's arm more tightly. . . . “What Werther is singing now, before the entrance to the house, in this beautiful morning, and what the orchestra is singing with him, is a homage, a hymn to nature rather than to woman. . . . Isn't that so? . . . Listen, friend Roberto . . . ah! that violoncello solo . . . and now the violin, the preludes from the harps, the clear and tenuous tones of the flutes,—all this song of ecstasy above an accompaniment that undulates and throbs, recalls the fields, and has a scent of summer, the odor of ripe grain, of new-

mown hay, the murmur of the zephyrs in the vine leaves, the coolness of the water that flows murmuringly through the flower-mottled meadow."

Only two boxes had remained unoccupied in the thronged auditorium.

There was a bang of doors,— tric, trac — and into these two boxes, amid a shuffling of chairs and the striking of canes that caused all eyes to turn in that direction, thus destroying the harmony of the moment, there appeared Landáburo, González Mogollón, Mata, Agüeros,— the guests of the political banquet — who noisily took their places.

Landáburo placed himself in the center of one of the boxes, between Karlonoff and Mata; he folded his gloves across the railing, thrust out his chest, arranged his pink, coughed, swept the theater with his circular glance, flattered to see that although he was interrupting the performance, he had become the target of all eyes. In the rear of the box flashed Doctor Agüeros' spectacles. In the furthest corner, Roberto's opera-glasses espied Alcón's pale bald head.

"That is the group," said Roberto to Bellegarde, "which, not understanding art, would enjoy the sport of war."

Alejandro, in ill humor, wrinkled his brow and added:

"And just as they have come now to interrupt the performance, for the sake of being seen, so they wish to disturb the peace and the prosperity which our country now enjoys."

The audience soon settled back and centered its attention anew upon the stage. Werther and Carlotta, in the moonlight, are singing a love duet, filled with memories and with supreme farewells. With chaste and tender speech she exclaims, "We must part . . ." And after a melody that rises and falls, recalling the breath of the zephyrs, the twinkling of a star, the mystery of the night, the orchestra plays its prelude of gloomy farewell; the harmony of the accompaniment vibrates, the glacial gust passes, the persistent, somber bass sighs.

The curtain fell. Roberto, between the acts, paid a visit to the Inés's box; no sooner had the knob moved than she turned around, greeting him with a gentle inclination of her neck and shoulders. Up to that moment she had been cold and serious; at once, however, she became lively, and a pink flush rose from her heart to her cheeks. "She's a marble statue," Doña Aura

had commented in the opposite box; but noticing how animated Inés had become, the poetess bent over and whispered something behind her fan into Mata's ear. From this, Roberto and Inés guessed that they were the topic of the conversation. In Doña Aura de Cardoso's box there was an unceasing stir, and she, exuberant, her eyes smiling through her gold-rimmed glasses, with a certain forced animation by which she tried to conceal her forty years, turned this way and that, shook hands with Mata, Agüeros, Landáburo and all the rest who came to visit her and court her in homage to her husband's position as "an international conspirator," the "champion of Revaluation," "the immortal Cardoso."

At the back of Doña Teresa's box was General Ronderos, silent, frowning, biting at his mustache. He had come only to please and accompany Doña Teresa; it had been some time since he had gone to the theater; the spectacle brought to mind other festivities; between the stage and his glance there arose scenes from the past; in spirit he lived again long years of his life; his stormy youth; Mirándola and Rosina's company; the balls and the banquets given by his father; that first love affair, the fatal duel; the death of his adversary, his escape from the country, his residence in Europe so many years; the return to his native land; his happy marriage, his labors in the country bordering the Magdalena; his rehabilitated fortune; his wife's death; then that of his daughter, in a hunting accident; his loneliness; then politics, to forget his sorrows in the agitation of public life; his love, now concentrated entirely upon his country. . . . Ah! His country, for which he had suffered so much! His campaigns, the determined, constant struggle with the Revaluation party; the endless conflict; his anxiety to see this nation peaceful and happy! In vain! . . . Here he had come to the end of his years,— was already a man with overwhelming responsibilities, and he could see the strife breaking out anew, and, yonder on the horizon, the threatening clouds of another tempest. . . .

"You're preoccupied, General. . . . Don't you care for the opera?" asked Roberto.

"The opera?" he repeated, waking from his thoughts, returning from afar. "Yes, Roberto, my boy, I am preoccupied. This Landáburo, although he goes around making speeches about peace, is without doubt up to something. This Revalua-

tion party, as they call it, or Revolution party, as I call it, is by no means napping. . . . Just look at them there, over in that virago's box,— Señora Cardoso's; there's a mysterious air about them,— an air of mutual understanding, joy. . . . Ah! Tubalcain Cardoso! It's many months since he left Mexico. I've lost track of him. . . . Will he invade us? . . . I've sent telegrams to all the consuls. . . .”

“ Yes, I told you so the other night, over at Aunt Teresa's; we must keep wide awake. . . . But the government counts on many friends.”

“ Friends? . . . You can see for yourself; within our own party ranks there is a group of dissenters; last night” (he lowered his voice and bent forward as he added this), “ last night there was a meeting at the home of that chump, González Mogollón, for the purpose of deciding what attitude they shall assume toward those agitators. They've made a peace pact, and I call it a war agreement. And among many others, there were present that hypocrite Alcón, that swindler Karlonoff, and others who are supposed to be friends of ours, and who yet obey Sánchez Méndez. And this political banquet. . . . Yes, I've got reason to be worried.”

Roberto left.

Bellegarde entered the box and sat down beside Inés.

“ You were right,” she said, leaning her opera-glasses against the railing of the box,—“ you were right: exquisite music, original, novel; still, I don't quite understand it yet. . . . I see, of course, that the orchestra plays a very important part; its rôle in the Italian operas we know here is a modest, servant's one. . . . It seems to me that in this modern music the orchestra has risen in the social scale, and is in a higher class than before . . . it is as important as the human voice.”

“ Yes, indeed, señorita, precisely! . . . and Massenet has made so much of a theme that would have perhaps proved sterile to others. . . . He discovered an immense passion and drew inspiration from it. . . . One of those passions,” he continued in a deeper tone, “ which transform an existence, which fill an entire lifetime, which inspire a man's every act.”

“ Yes; one of those passions,” commented Inés with an arch smile, “ that are no longer in style. A man who would cherish

such a one to-day would appear ridiculous, outmoded, just as if he wore this day a surcoat and a powdered wig."

"And it is strange," continued Bellegarde, assuming once more his cold voice, "that Goethe should describe this passion,—such an intense passion,—and so sincere a one,—without ever having felt it; his romantic crisis was very soon over, like a child's illness: slight and short."

"Then Goethe would have been more noble had he felt the passion and not described it."

At this point General Ronderos and Doña Teresa joined the conversation; Doña Teresa declared frankly that she preferred *Carmen* or *Cavalleria Rusticana*; the music of these operas was much more understandable, and, above all, more happy; the toreador's song was one of her favorite pieces. . . . She couldn't stand sad, melancholy music. . . . There were enough troubles and afflictions in the real world without going to the theater to add to them with feigned sorrows.

"Don't you agree with me, Ronderos?"

He, however, excused himself on the grounds of utter incompetence in the matter of music; he recalled having read *Werther* with much pleasure, some time before, and had realized that the book revealed a morbid imagination and contained a powerful poison, of great strength, as he had told himself, and a glorification of suicide.

"In short," he concluded, "it wouldn't surprise me that an edition of *Werther* should have an immense success in this country; for the book would harmonize with the dominant passion of the land: the passion, the mania of destruction; a very powerful poison, the impulse to annihilate whatever is left standing; the suicidal craze, the nostalgia for death."

The bell announced the rise of the curtain. Bellegarde arose and bowed to Inés.

"I happen to think, at this moment," he said, "of the words with which Werther described to his friend the passion that dominates him. 'Ah, come what may, I cannot say that I have not known happiness.'—" And bowing still lower: "'I enjoy all the happiness that has been given to man.'"

He withdrew backwards, bowed ceremoniously at the door, and left.



Roberto had gone off in search of Alejandro; he had not found him in his box, so he walked toward the stage, opened the door that communicated to the wings, and crossed behind the scenery. In La Rondinelli's dressing-room stood Landáburo, Mata and Karlonoff, in heated discussion.

Karlonoff was continuing a monologue:

"In the innovations which I made in the construction of this theater I took as model the theater at Bayreuth, the cornerstone of which was laid in 1872; it was not opened, however, till 1876. Some ignorant architects say that the good acoustics of an auditorium is all a matter of accident; that's an egregious error. The Scala theater holds more than three thousand spectators, while the model theater of Bayreuth can accommodate only one thousand, seven hundred and fifty-eight. . . ."

Alejandro, seated upon the red plush sofa, was examining the painting upon a fan. La Rondinelli, at the dressing-table, which was laden with bottles, was combing her hair, as she sucked her lozenge; she was complaining of the effort it required to sing, and of the defective acoustics of the auditorium. Malatesta, who, leaning against the door, was gulping down a glass of beer, ventured the observation that this defect had not existed the past season, when he had sung there. The evil was due to an alteration that had recently been made.

"Yes," agreed la Rondinelli, turning her head. "They say that the theater has been spoiled now, by some Russian or Polish scholar . . . a fellow by the name . . . what's his name, now?"

"I have it," said Malatesta—"A Russian, wasn't he? No . . . he must have been a German. . . . Kar . . . Karlonoff. . . . That's it!" he exclaimed in his resonant voice. . . . "A stupid barbarian, that Karlonoff."

All suppressed their laughter. One of the visitors, unable to restrain himself any longer, exploded.

"What are they laughing at?" asked la Rondinelli.—"Why did that gentleman leave?"

"Ha! Ha!" they replied. "Didn't you know? That was Karlonoff."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Malatesta. "A Russian . . . that . . ."

"Impossible!" burst from la Rondinelli. "That . . . the Polish scholar? Ha! Ha!"

And the entire company laughed heartily.

Ganzález asked a benefit for the Teaching Hospital.

"What grace," said Alejandro, "what art, mademoiselle, you put into those three notes of the theme, that afterwards are interwoven into the orchestral score; that last theme, so pure in the flutes, so sparkling in the tones of the harps, so drenched with tenderness in the violoncellos!"

"Those three dominating notes, unless I am mistaken," said Roberto, "I have heard before, arranged in the same manner, in *La Patrie* and in *Cavallería Rusticana*."

"You don't say so!"

"Certainly you have a wonderful memory!" exclaimed Malatesta. "Really!"

Landáburo, who could not remain silent for long, began:

"I understand"—and he waved his arm as if he were brandishing a sword—"I understand but one theme: the blast of victory! I understand only one instrument: the drum, which speaks its mind frankly."

"Mademoiselle Rondinelli," said Doctor Agüeros, with his affected manner, passing his fingers through his hair,— "allow me to recommend a recipe,— some throat lozenges. They will strengthen your voice and counteract the acoustic deficiencies of the stage. . . . My clinical professor in Paris, Doctor Laplace . . ."

"Ready?" asked the prompter in the doorway. "Shall we sound the first signal?"

"Yes."

"Ah! The bugle,— there's another noble instrument," continued Landáburo. "Now in the last revolution, in my famous charge upon the heights of Gachaneque, thanks to the bugle . . ."

"The bugle?" exclaimed Karlonoff, who had glided back into their midst,— "the bugle was one of the worst errors committed by Napoleon at Austerlitz, and by Bolívar at Boyacá. Modern tactics have suppressed it. Signals, in order to avoid discovery by the enemy, should be made by the *kepis*."

The second call sounded. All left except Mata, who wished

to remain alone with la Rondinelli to declare his passion. But she, occupied in giving the finishing touches to her eyes with the pencil, paid no attention to what the symbolistic poet said.

"Werther's passion is a suggestive one, señorita. . . . A hopeless passion. . . . Will mine be the same? . . . Werther did well to commit suicide. Suicide is the most fitting end for a brain that is superior to its epoch. . . ."

Third call: a bell. The boxes and chairs began to fill up. The curtain rose: Carlotta is in her room, alone; it is night; she reads and re-reads Werther's letters; and the music follows the reading of the letters, echoing the phrases of love and sadness. Carlotta reads aloud: "I write from my lonely room," and the progress of the musical phrase, the pauses of the orchestra, the foreboding quiver of the basses,—all accompany the thought, all express abandonment, absence, suffering. Carlotta takes another letter: "The merry songs of the children come in through my window," and then the orchestra changes mood, becomes vivacious, laughs, plays, as if expressing childish animation. The beloved one reads the last sentence: "Will we ever meet again? . . . Never! Never!" Whereupon Carlotta becomes silent; but then the orchestra, interpreting the grief, utters a mighty, crashing chord.

Landáburu and Doctor Agüeros entered Doña Aura de Cardoso's box; they began to speak in a low voice, with serious expressions, and the countenance of the poetess gradually lost its jovial aspect, grew pale and more serious with each passing moment.

On the stage the great duet between Carlotta and Werther was going on,— a scene of hushed declamation between the simple village maiden and the agitated thinker, and in that room in which the very objects seemed to evoke recollections of love, the gloomy dialogue continued, insinuated by the human voice, accentuated by the plaints of the orchestra. Werther leaves and bids farewell forever.

Suddenly there comes a scream from Doña Aura's box. A fan falls to the pit; all heads are turned upon the spot, and behold the poetess, pale and leaning upon Landáburu's arm, leaves her box. The great news circulates throughout the theater: General Tubalcain Cardoso, the "great absent one," has died in the desert of Tarapazá.

After a moment's disturbance in the auditorium all opera-glasses are once more turned to the stage; the third act continues. A messenger from Werther brings a letter to Carlotta's husband: "Send me the pistols; I am about to go on a long journey." And Carlotta herself, innocently, unaware of her lover's intentions, hands over the arms in a mute scene; the human voice is silent and the tragic episode is accompanied by a single cry,— a tremor from the orchestra.

"Do you hear that, Roberto?" asked Bellegarde. "We're now at the most tragic moment of the opera, in which the personages must be silent and the instrumental music has the right, or rather, the duty, to speak for them."

Werther commits suicide: "Farewell, nature; garb yourself in mourning. Your child, your friend, your favorite, approaches his end." The curtain falls. There is an outburst of applause; the artists are called several times before the curtain; a group of enthusiasts goes behind the stage to congratulate them. Roberto and Alejandro stumble across Mata in a dark corner, behind a piece of scenery, pale and with a sinister look in his eyes. He is about to imitate Werther; the contagion of suicide has fascinated him; a revolver glistens in his hands; Alejandro tears it out of his grasp; González Mogollón, who has come to insist upon a benefit performance, intervenes:

"No, give him back his weapon. Mata has no intention of doing that. I'll bet my head on it. I'm going to enter him on the Compulsory Salvation's list of members."

"It's strange," commented Bellegarde to Alejandro, in the vestibule of the exit, while he raised the collar of his coat against the cold gusts that came from the street. "Here, in a privileged country, they don't think of life, of happiness, of art, of the sheer joy of existence, but rather of destruction, of war, of suicide. This young fellow, this Señor Mata, who has talent, and a future, plans suicide. Does this rich country, favored by God, plan suicide, too? . . . How strange this mysterious fascination is. . . ."

Roberto offered an explanation:

"—A mystery? . . . a fascination? . . . It's the nostalgia for death."

## CHAPTER X

## IN THE EAGLE'S TALONS

MONTELLANO, installed in the ancient home of the Ávilas, is writing in his office, a vast room upon the walls of which hang the plans of his estates. The crude light which enters through the open balcony windows, strikes cold glints from the iron safe, from the copying-press, from the copper clasps of the account books and from the varnish of the shelves. He is sending out telegrams, orders, instructions to every corner of the Republic, in which he maintains in constant motion a veritable army of employees, to whom Montellano is always present, and who imagine that they can hear his grumbling voice at every moment, dominating all else: "Increase rent by one hundred twenty-three thousand dollars. . . ." "Demand payment from Pepe Redondo without accepting any excuses. . . ." "Give salt to cattle; indispensable increase jugs milk. . . ." "Buy up orders for payment and stopped military pensions, but don't give any more than thirty per cent of their value. . . ." "Sell cattle dead from epidemic, look out for confiscation. . . ." It is absolutely necessary for the gigantic machine to keep going, without stopping for a moment; from every direction there must come flowing streams of money to fill that insatiable monster that lurks in a corner with open jaw: the iron safe. At times he pauses, hesitates, concentrates his thoughts; his black, round eyes assume the hard, external brilliancy of an eagle's; it seems that from his eerie he surveys the entire panorama of the republic; his glance sweeps immeasurable expanses; yonder he discovers, in an obscure spot accessible only to him, a bit of prey, a certain profit. During his meditation he remains as if in ecstasy, while he moves his fingers in unconscious spasms, and as soon as he has come to a decision, in the violence of his desire he opens his hand and then slowly half closes it.

Through the windows come the noises of the city, which is beginning to stir, and the morning breeze, which ruffles the covers of the lounges and the tablecloth; a distant din is heard, — a confusion of bells, the rolling of wheels and the clatter of hoofs, the snap of whips, whistles . . . the commotion ap-

proaches and grows louder . . . the street-car passes by, and there is heard the persistent, monotonous clang of a bell that summons folk to mass; from the street, footsteps, clearing of throats, the rumble of carts and carriages.

From a neighboring room are wafted the clear, mechanical tones of the piano at which Dolores is studying: do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si-do . . . do-si-la-sol-fa-mi-re-do. . . .”

A soft tap at the door.

“Come in!”

Amid the sound of beads and medallions there enter two Sisters of Charity. . . . The millionaire envelops them in a rapid glance; he makes a gesture of annoyance; he observes the masculine figure and the square shoulders of Sister Visitación, and bows with a movement of instinctive respect to Sister San Ligorio. Every day she is thinner, more spiritualized. The eyes in her dark sockets possess an ineffable fascination, and reveal the incurable nostalgia of the exiled, the glorious tranquillity of hope.

“What brings you here, Sisters?” asked Montellano in his stentorian voice, arising and taking several paces that made the floor tremble.

All were seated; there was a brief pause during which the room resounded with the whirl of the street-cars and the bell of a nearby tower. The Sisters glanced at each other; it was Sister San Ligorio who spoke, and as she did so, she gently raised her hands, which had been resting upon the arms of the chair: long, aristocratic hands, as if made of immortal substance. Her voice, sadly musical, penetrated to the depths of one's soul.

“Señor Montellano, we know of your generosity, and we have come to ask alms for the sick who cannot go to the hospitals and who are cared for by Sister Visitación and me at their own homes.”

Montellano whirled about on his swivel-chair till the spring creaked, and then rose.

“Alms, my dear Sisters? But you can't imagine what a plight I'm in . . . the Bogotá expenditures are enormous . . . and these lessons Dolores takes. . . . I don't make anything at all . . . nobody pays me. . . .”

He turned to the wall and slapped a plan that was signed by Karlonoff.

"There was a fortune invested in the reconstruction of this house alone. . . . Karlonoff nearly ruined me with his faulty plan. . . ."

As he spoke he gesticulated wildly, assuming desperate postures. His voice drowned out the tumult of the street, the rumble of the carts and the carriages, the clatter of hoofs, the piercing cry of the vendors: "Get your lottery tickets here! . . . *La Revaluación!* . . . *La Integridad!* . . . *El Escorpión,* with a caricature . . . !"

"Pardon us, Señor Montellano," said the Sister in her melodious voice. "We shall return upon a more propitious occasion; our poor sick charges lack everything and we are obliged to have recourse to the charity of compassionate souls. . . ."

Once again Montellano's booming voice burst forth.

"My dear Sisters, you own about twenty houses, half of la Sabana, shares in every bank, funds in Europe . . . rather than my helping you, you could come to my aid. . . ."

The Sisters smiled protestingly, resignedly, and amid the noise of their beads and their medallions they walked to the door.

"You will obtain better information," said Sister Visitación, turning to Montellano. "We will return later; we lack no confidence in your generous heart."

"Wait a moment! Wait a moment!" cried Montellano. "I don't want you to leave empty-handed."

And he began to rummage very eagerly through his coat pocket, the pockets of his vest, of his trousers. At last he found two filthy bills,—two bills of a peso apiece, and he gave them to Sister San Ligorio.

"Heaven reward you, Señor Montellano."

At the foot of the staircase the Sisters met Alejandro, who, on noticing them, grew suddenly silent and bowed very low.

"Monsieur Alexandre," said Sister Visitación, "why haven't you come to visit us?"

"I'll come to-morrow. . . ."

After they had gone he ascended the stairs hurriedly. He came across Alcón at the office door; but Alejandro walked straight in, leaving the door open. Alcón returned to the gallery where he had been waiting, and while Alejandro was busy, became engrossed anew in his reading: LA INTEGRIDAD —

Director, *Luis Sánchez Méndez*. He was eager to taste the pleasure of reading an article that had been composed by him and Karlonoff with the object of thrusting difficulties into the way of Ronderos and his friends. How he delighted in smelling the odor of fresh ink from his writings!

CANALIZATION.—Our worthy readers have already been informed of the contract made some three months ago between his honor the Minister of Finance and Senor Bellegarde. Acting as the interpreters of the taste and the wishes of our compatriots we wish to satisfy one and the other by gathering the views of persons who understand the matter and belong to different classes, parties and professions. Accordingly we have sent questionnaires to the gentleman whose names follow. . . .

Noticing the intrusion of a French idiom, he was thunder-struck, as if by an electric shock. He could see that Karlonoff had at the very last moment gone over the proofs. He thought he would be lost if his collaboration in the article should become known, and had resolved to hide his complicity at all events, by this grammatical error.

"The director of *La Integridad*," ran the note that had been sent to the persons listed, "in view of your well-known competency in fiscal affairs, engineering and canalization, respectfully asks you to reply to the various questions of the following interrogatory, if it be your pleasure to do so."

From the end of the corridor came the scales and the vocal exercises that Dolores was studying; — a passage that was forever begun and forever cut short; la Rondinelli's voice would mingle with the sounds.

"Let us begin over again, señorita."

Alcón continued to read:

1. In your opinion, is the work of canalization a scientific possibility?
2. Should complete faith be placed in the plans, sketches, outlines and draughts presented to the Ministry by the French engineers?
3. Would the system of movable dikes be preferable to the use of dredgers?
4. In this enterprise, undertaken with foreign capital, would there not be a danger to national security and in general to the Latin race in America?
5. In case a million francs is placed into the Treasury as a bond, to what purpose should this money be devoted?
6. If, in your opinion, it should be devoted to the amortization of our weak currency, what procedure should be followed?



The director of *La Integridad* hopes for an early reply.

Addressed to Doctor Melchor J. Alcón, publicist and philologist.— General Floro Landáburo, the well-known revolutionist.— Doctor Carlos Onofre Sandoval y Sabogal, colonel of bridges and highways. Doctor R. Agüeros, physician.— S. C. Mata, poet.— Giovanni Malatesta, artist.— N. Gonzáles Mogollón, merchant.— Ramón Montellano, banker.— Nic. Villafane, commission merchant.— Nabuc. Benavides, agriculturalist and coffee plantation owner.— N. Tapia, agriculturalist.— John K. Gacharnah, traveling agent.— Escipión Socarraz, politician and journalist.— Terencio Nochols, photographer.— Expósito Montes, manufacturer of footwear.— Nerón Jaspe, professor of tailoring (studios in Dublin and Naples).— Sinai Largacha, book-binder.— Aura de Cardoso, man of letters.”

Alcón stopped reading with a start, for from the office came the sounds of an altercation between the millionaire’s bellowing voice and that of Alejandro, which was quivering with rage.

“It’s already two months since we closed the sale of *Cebaderos*, and we haven’t finished yet.”

“The deed was signed yesterday. What more do you wish, Don Alejandro?”

“I’m all out of patience: after endless chaffering we fixed a price of 55,000 dollars. . . . When it came to signing the documents you suddenly discovered that you would have to remodel the house of the estate. . . . Whereupon we had to draw up another deed at the notary’s, and there you added, without even consulting me, that the expenses of the registry and the notary’s fee would be paid by me. I agreed to that, too. . . .”

“Well, if you agreed, what are you complaining about, Don Alejandro?”

“Two weeks later, when you gave me your word of honor that nothing would be altered in the document, you added a new clause. . . .”

“You mean that about the walls?” asked the raucous voice.

“Yes,” replied the angry one.

“Why, you agreed to that, too.”

“At last, Don Ramón, the document was signed yesterday, in which you yourself had set down that you would pay 55,000 dollars in gold or in letters of exchange. . . .”

“Very well. And didn’t I give you, yesterday, when the paper was signed, the letters of exchange?”

“Not on Europe, though, but on the square of Manizales,

and I haven't been able to find a purchaser. . . . Nobody needs funds in Manizales."

"That's easily arranged."

"Will you give me gold?"

"Not quite that. My dear Alejandro, you confessed freely, at the notary's, that you were fully satisfied. I'll exchange the letters on Manizales for some on Europe, if you allow me a rebate."

"I had confidence in your good faith, Montellano, and I was mistaken. How much must I pay for my blunder?"

"Let's fix it at 50,000 dollars even money."

"To me it's a question of honor,—something that you don't understand. I promised to pay Bellegarde to-day the value of the shares that he gave me months ago, trusting in my word."

Alcón heard the door close violently, and shortly afterward saw Alejandro, his cheeks flaming red and his eyes flashing, cross the corridor that resounded with the anger of his footsteps and stride toward the staircase.

"My dear Doctor Alcón," said Montellano, taking him by the arm and leading him to a couch upon which the sunshine was playing. "Who could ever have prophesied that you would become one of our learned men, one of our most important political figures!"

The pale bald pate of the learned man flushed crimson. They sat down. Montellano lighted a cigar, stretched out his feet and emitted voluminous puffs of smoke.

Silence. Into the room, through the balconies, comes the ring of a bicycle bell, the bark of a dog, the buzz of conversations, whistles, the footsteps of passers-by upon the flagging.

The piano lesson having been finished, the singing lesson followed. Through the open door came the sounds of Dolores' clear voice singing the well-known aria from *Carmen*:

L'amour est enfant de Bohême  
Il n'a jamais connu de loi;  
Si tu ne m'aimes pas, je t'aime,  
Si je t'aime prends garde à toi. . . .

The sentiment sounded strange in this temple of Mammon, in which reigned only the brutal egotism of commercial combinations, the lust for gain, for huge profits.

Montellano stood up, closed the door with the key and, after sucking powerfully at the cigar, exclaimed:

"Dolores has turned the house into a school; ten lessons a day: piano, singing, painting, department, grammar, French, Italian, history . . . and it's all bosh; if she only knew how to cook, that would be plenty."

At the mention of Dolores, the ivory pate was bathed in a purple glow.

"Friend Alcón, you are a wise man; the kind I like; you'll make headway. You have chosen the career which in this country can lead you to the most elevated positions, the highest posts: grammar, literature. You entered the government service and got into the ministry by supporting General Ronderos in the press, in *El Sostén Oficial*, and then, very naturally,— and I heartily applaud your course,— in order to advance, you joined the *íntegro* party, which confers a stamp of honesty, useful for whatever operation you may engage in."

The learned man kept prudently silent and Montellano continued, drawing closer and closer and enveloping him in his aquiline glance, which was now soft, caressing, fascinating.

"If they were to throw you out of the Ministry under such circumstances, it would be said that it was through fear of your legal knowledge,— because you had discovered hidden manipulations, speculation, indications of graft."

Then, lowering his voice, and assuming an even more confidential tone:

"The government has this Sabanilla railroad; I know that the canalization project is making headway and has the river at Bocas de Ceniza all cleared; the moment ships begin sailing up that way, the railroad will be left without any business; it will produce nothing,— it will be worth nothing. Nevertheless, I would buy it for a small price, on terms. . . . Do you wonder that I should care to purchase a fallen, ruined enterprise? Well, my friend, I have had plenty of experience, I know the country, and unforeseen contingencies may arise . . . and together with them would come the failure of the canalization project, the depreciation of money. . . ." And as if he could already behold his profits, and already hear the torrent of bills that was to fall upon his safe, Montellano involuntarily passed

his hand nervously along his arm, along the back of the chair, across the seat of the lounge.

Alcón, who, while his friend was speaking, had kept his eyes fixed upon the design of the carpet, raised his glance and directed it straight into Montellano's eyes, letting it fall again. Montellano, now enthusiastic, continued:

"I'd like you also to help me in the matter of that government loan that I have pending with Ronderos, so that he'll take at least half of it in orders for payment. This is the most important thing for the present. . . . And another very important matter: to suspend or withdraw the funds of the 1848 bonds. . . . That's easy . . . that would be a saving."

Somebody knocked loudly at the door. Alcón, frightened, at once arose, coughed, spoke gruffly and turned toward the door. As he accompanied his visitor to the door, Montellano said:

"You won't be sorry for it, my dear Alcón . . . you won't regret it. . . ."

Polanco, the millionaire's agent, had arrived the previous evening from la Costa. He was a pleasant young man, with refined, bronze features and sparkling eyes. He informed his chief that he had carried through the operation that had been commanded,—the purchase of the cultivated land bordering upon the River Magdalena, for the purpose of selling them in turn to the canalization commission, who had urgent need of them. An enormous and immediate profit would thus be made.

On learning of the conditions of the purchase, Montellano burst into protest; he had been pledged to pay the high price in cash.

"It's no use; whatever I don't do myself is simply botched. There's no way of getting you fellows sufficiently interested to put energy and intelligence into business affairs. . . . And how about the canalization?"

"They're making excellent headway; plenty of people. . . ."

He continued to explain matters to Montellano, in a voice that rose and fell frequently, offering complete details as to the point reached by the enterprise.

"And how about la Costa?"

"There's plenty doing; there's business; but we've succeeded in creating general dissatisfaction, and Landáburo, on his tour,

has organized the Revaluation party, speaking a great deal about the government's rashness and its speculations. If the *íntegros* don't cause trouble, as they've done other times. . . ."

"Very well, you'll keep me informed. And if anything turns up, we'll carry out a certain operation on the Sabanilla railroad."

A knock at the door; Socarraz crossed the salon noiselessly, despite his corpulency,—as if he were gliding along.

He took Montellano to the balcony and drew a manuscript from his pocket.

"Read, Don Ramón."

And he read an article entitled: *The avaricious wealthy man*, in which the populace was incited to tear Montellano to shreds, to sack his placé and take possession of his ill-gotten fortune.

"Have you finished it?" asked Socarraz, fixing his slanting eyes upon the millionaire. "This and a monstrous caricature was brought to me in the office of the *Escorpión*; they would have sold widely; but I didn't care to publish them, despite my opinions."

Montellano, who felt uneasy with the journalist's squinting glance turned upon him, and was disgusted with the odor of brandy that came from him, without further ado drew from his pocket a roll of bills and offered it to him.

"No, no, what I wish is a place in your enterprises,—in your tobacco houses, your match monopoly, on one of your haciendas. . . . I'm adaptable to everything."

He was about to go on, when Nerón Jaspe, the professor of tailoring, with studios in Dublin and Naples, appeared with a black bundle under his arm. Montellano gladly seized upon this opportunity to cut off Socarraz, and turning eagerly to Nerón Jaspe, said:

"I was waiting for you, friend; fit on my frock coat."

He took off his coat and threw it upon the lounge. The tailor took the frock, approached courteously and helped Montellano put it on. He stood before his patron, straightened out the shirt, pulled once or twice at the lapels and drew back to survey the work.

"Looks fine," he said, with a satisfied smile.

A gentle couple of knocks at the door.

"Come in!"

It was Bellegarde. Noticing that Montellano was busy with his tailor, he was about to withdraw.

"Come right in, right in!" shouted Montellano. "I was wishing to see you because I want a favor."

"A favor? If it's at all possible for me to render it, consider it done."

"Not for me; for this young man"—and he pointed to Socarraz—"who is anxious to get a position."

Bellegarde looked at Socarraz sharply, blinked, and hesitated for a moment. Then, recovering his formal attitude:

"A position?" he asked. "Do you wish it, Señor Montellano?"

"I'll be ever so much obliged to you. It would be very good for you, for him, for everybody. . . ."

"Very well," he said. "Let him come to my office whenever he pleases."

The tailor continued to mark wrinkles and stick in pins, which he carried between his lips. He bent over and then arose again. He took a sleeve, ripped it off and placed it to one side.

"What brings you here?" asked Montellano, turning to Bellegarde and gesticulating with the arm on which his shirt-sleeve could be seen.

"I came to speak about the lands that you have purchased through Señor Polanco"—and he bowed to the latter as he mentioned his name—"on the banks of the river. You got ahead of me there. Very good. You had faith in the enterprise, evidently. I must pay for being caught napping and for your faith. I'm perfectly well satisfied that all the Colombians should profit by it. Will you take double the price for these lands? . . . It would make a profit . . . pardon me a moment." He drew out a memorandum book, performed a rapid calculation and continued: "A profit to you of two hundred thousand francs."

Polanco, who heard the figures from where he stood, could not repress a gesture of satisfaction and glanced at Montellano covetously, yet triumphantly, as if in reply to the recriminations and the gibes of a moment before.

Montellano, now inflamed by the fever of gain, began to move impulsively about, while the tailor continued to dance hither and thither after him, tearing off the other sleeve, drawing lines

with chalk and indicating the places for the buttonholes.

"These lands," vociferated the millionaire, waving both his shirt-sleeves, "constitute the sole legacy of my children. . . ." He had made such ruinous sacrifices to be able to purchase them. . . . They had cost him far more than the Count imagined; envious tongues had given him untrustworthy information. . . . But he was in great need of money, in dire distress, pressed by his creditors . . . and perhaps to please the Count he might consider the sale, but not for the sum offered; oh, no,—far more. . . . The success of the project was certain; the value of these lands was therefore incalculable, for peace was firm, lasting. . . .

As he waved his arms the links of the cuffs struck together. On the white linen of the cuffs could be seen figures, calculations, words, and notes written in pencil.

He paced to and fro, he tore at his hair, he assumed the desolate attitudes of a man on the brink of bankruptcy and burst into a torrent of lamentations.

"You know me," said Bellegarde drily. "You know that I pay well, that I don't haggle, and that I finish my business at a single sitting. Take it or leave it." And he turned as if to go.

With his rat-like step Karlonoff had slid into the room, waving a paper and crying:

"Señor, I've come to collect my little bill. This is the eighth time that I'm presenting it."

And Señor Montellano turned so brusky toward Karlonoff that he would have thrown over the tailor-professor and his studios in Dublin and Naples, had not the latter got out of the way.

"You and your little bill? It's I who ought to collect from you for all the damage you did me with your wretched plan; you almost forced me out in the street."

Bellegarde advanced nearer to the door.

"Just a moment," shouted Montellano. "We'll come to an understanding."

"No, señor," replied Karlonoff to Montellano's earlier remark, pounding upon the plan. "It's true that there was a collapse, but that did no harm."

The tailor-professor, Socarraz and Polanco had formed a

group apart, and were whispering, maintaining a mysterious, animated conversation.

"No harm?" exploded Montellano. "When the walls bulged the entire roof was damaged, and the beams gave way. Just a moment, Señor Bellegarde. . . . The ceiling of the hall cracked; the fleuron fell to the ground . . . a plaster fleuron. . . . Please wait, Señor Bellegarde, we'll easily come to an understanding. . . . The floor was damaged, too. . . . So the collapse did no harm, did it? Come out into the street and let me show you; you'll see with your own eyes the size of the cracks; your plan is worthless. . . ."

The tailor, alarmed, seeing that his customer had forgotten his coat,—that frock coat which was only basted and lacked sleeves—ran after him. He tried to hold him back by the coat-tails, which ripped and remained hanging.

Below, in the street, amid a circle of curious bystanders, Karlonoff was imperturbably continuing a scientific lecture, while Montellano, in his fragmentary frock-coat, with one hand grasped the colonel of bridges and highways and with the other pointed to the famous cracks.

At this moment Bellegarde happened to pass by, fleeing the din; but the eagle's eyes ferreted him out; the hand that was pointing at the wall slowly closed; fearing that his prey would escape the millionaire cried out:

"Bellegarde . . . agreed! But I want cash . . . American gold. . . ."

## CHAPTER XI

### THE HORRORS OF PEACE

WITHOUT paying any attention to the commotion that was going on in the street, nor to the strange figure of Montellano, Roberto entered his former home. He had brought with him the accounts of various establishments, and with this purpose came to Don Ramón's office every day for one or two hours of the morning. The millionaire never treated him with the asperity or the recriminations that he used with his employees and



agents; on the contrary, with general admiration and without mumbling, he tolerated his jests and his lack of punctuality.

Don Ramón, who was a great connoisseur of men and of the manner in which their talents and aptitudes might best be exploited, esteemed above all Roberto's reserve; he knew that his dealings with that man would always remain a secret, and that not a word which was spoken in the office would be repeated by Roberto. Besides, his accountant furnished him with exact data concerning persons and things, and had often given him useful advice and valuable information, without ever having asked for the slightest share or advantage.

Indeed, Montellano was at this very time developing a scheme that had been suggested to him by his book-keeper. An old woman, in need of money, had come and offered him some bonds of public credit from the debt of 1848. Montellano had dismissed the woman with the utmost harshness, and Roberto, moved by compassion, had then convinced him that those papers, the holders of which were in hard straits, would double in value on the day on which they were gathered, for solid funds of amortization were allotted to them. Montellano, after thinking it over and studying the matter thoroughly, resolved to carry it out, but improving it in his own way. In order to gather all the bonds at a low price he asked Alcón, Undersecretary of Finance, to have the amortization fund suppressed, with the understanding that it would be reestablished and increased when the entire public debt was in his hands.

In order to effect the purchase he was careful not to make use of the money changers or the commercial brokers, who would have scented the business, and he entrusted the operation to the selfsame old lady that had offered him the first bonds, as well as to other persons in like circumstances, who could inspire no suspicion whatever.

Above the portal of the house there had been preserved, half hidden by the whitening, the escutcheon with the thirteen bezants and the inscription *Glory and Grief*; Roberto could hardly restrain a movement of impatience at beholding the unsullied shield of the Ávilas in that lair of greed. He was mortified, too, by the "euphonic green" and the "iniquitous yellow," as Mata phrased it, with which the stone pilasters were besmeared, — the cornices of the arches, the basin of the fountain. . . .

The water continued its strange speech and at times Roberto imagined he heard the sounds of ironic laughter.

The brilliant green of the bush of Castilian roses competed with the "euphonic green" of the balustrade, and its fragrance mingled with the odor of the fresh paint. Roberto was pleased to see that the rose-bush was cared for diligently and that a veritable milky way of flowers descended from the balustrade to the yard.

The young man, who had not forgotten that the best of flowers is a maiden's smile, left the roses and approached the staircase. He knew that this smile would be waiting for him at the top stair.

According to Montellano's plans and to Karlonoff's as well, the stone staircase, which invaded one wing of the house to no purpose, had been replaced by a central staircase,—a very high one, which left room for two stores at a rental of a hundred dollars each.

Roberto stopped to rest a moment from the fatigue of the ascent; at the end of the hall a lesson was interrupted, a feminine hand drew aside a little curtain and there appeared the rosy, turbulent face of Lola, who, as she smiled, revealed the shining white enamel of her teeth. Roberto replied with a smile. The singing lesson was then resumed: "Love is a child of Bohemia. . . ."

He entered the office, crossed it and took his place before a high desk upon which stood the books with the copper clasps.

Montellano returned from the street and behind him came Landáburo, who was all decked out in boots, spurs, gauntlets and carried his silver-handled whip.

Catching sight of him, Montellano made a gesture of annoyance and maintained a hostile silence.

"General Polanco," cried Landáburo, embracing the millionaire's agent,— "you here? —" Then, in a confidential tone: "I'll expect you to-night at my house; I must talk with you on a very important matter."

Then, turning to Montellano:

"I should like to have a few words with you."

And as he spoke, he struck his boot with his whip.

Montellano preserved his severe frown, his hostile silence.

Landáburo tried to take him amicably by the arm and lead

him toward the window. At this Montellano's brick-like complexion flamed up and he released his arm brusksly.

"What is the trouble, my dear friend?" exclaimed Landáburo. "Are you angry?"

Montellano exploded.

"Didn't you say at that political banquet that all fortunes must be returned to the people? That they should not be allowed to be passed on to one's heirs,— in other words, that we persons who have saved something through our own efforts should be despoiled of our possessions? . . ."

He was about to go on when Landáburo interrupted.

"Ah, my dear Don Ramón, is that all? I give you my word as a soldier, as a gentleman and as a friend, that I had no intention of doing you any harm,— that those sentences were directed neither against you nor anybody else. You are too intelligent not to understand that they were for exportation, for the mob that had filled the doorways, and that a man in my position, upon whom are fixed the glances of all, rich and poor, and from whom the people expect relief and prosperity, must utter sentiments such as those, just as bones are thrown to dogs, so that they may not continue to be called by their enemies monarchists and aristocrats. But it doesn't mean anything, has no importance, and no results. . . ."

"No results?" interrupted Montellano. "Do you know that I have received anonymous letters in which I am asked not for alms, but for that part of my fortune which I am withholding from the people, and that some have tried to suppress me, so that they may inherit my wealth according to your theories and your incitation?"

"Well, then, to erase this bad impression and to produce in the people a feeling of sympathy toward you, I'll write this very moment for the *Revaluation* an article in which I'll praise you to the skies . . . and this very moment the title occurs to me: 'Make way for labor!'"

Although Montellano was not entirely pacified by Landáburo, and did not accept his protestations, feeling a certain instinctive aversion to the fellow, he acted as if he were quite content, foreseeing the possibility of a war in which Landáburo might ruin him by developing his socialistic program.

They retired to the balcony window.

"You must know," pursued Landábuero, "that I represent the house of MacGregor, which for the past twenty years has owned certain maritime salt mines. You, Señor Montellano, have offered the Government proof that my clients have no valid title to the exploitation of these mines, and in exchange for this service you ask to have the mines rented to you. Isn't that so?"

Montellano nodded in confirmation.

"Very well, then, I come," continued the General, "to propose that you withdraw your offer and join with us."

"Which proves to me," replied Montellano cunningly, "that I've won out. I refuse to yield. I have offered four hundred thousand pesos per year for the salt mines that you exploit for forty thousand. If I were to accept the proposal that you make, the Government would lose three hundred and sixty thousand pesos."

"That's the best part of the deal, Señor Don Ramón, for everything that deprives the Government of resources is a patriotic act. Furthermore, if you sincerely desire the welfare of the country, you can accomplish that more effectively by preventing the diplomatic clash that I'll bring about if we two don't come to terms, and which will undoubtedly result in the bombardment of Cartagena and Buenventura, or the payments of a few millions in gold. These Government robbers must be given a lesson."

"So that you count upon the English cannon, and will resort to them?" asked Montellano in surprise.

Landábuero, gesticulating wildly, then explained himself in a low voice, trying to win over the millionaire. The latter was on the point of leaving for his office anew, but Landábuero seized his arm.

"I'd like to solicit something for the poor Poles; I'm raising a subscription throughout the Republic to give them aid."

"Nothing, nothing; I give nothing to foreigners; we have plenty of poor Poles here, too."

"It's for the Polish insurrection, I tell you," insisted Landábuero, insinuatingly.

"Very well, very well," replied Montellano, after a moment's reflection in which he saw what was really afoot.—"Come back some other time. I know now who your poor Poles are and where this uprising will take place. . . . And if you should

happen to be forced to leave, tell your family that they may count on me."

"And you, friend Montellano, may be sure that I will be infinitely obliged. I give you my word of honor as a soldier, as a gentleman and as a friend. You already know how loyal I am. In short, I'll write to MacGregor. Now I must leave you, for I must finish my editorial for *La Revaluación*; you'll see what a drubbing I give Ronderos. The editorial is called 'Kleptomania.'"

Montellano, who did not know what the word meant, shrugged his shoulders as usual.

Mincing footsteps were heard from the gallery. The curtain stirred with an unexpected gust; then came a loud guffaw, and in walked Gacharnah, panting, with his white vest, a gardenia in his button-hole, with gloves the color of raw meat, lavishing smiles on all sides and waving his fat hands, which seemed to multiply a hundred fold for the purpose of distributing effusive handclasps.

"Roberto!" he cried, "and how is Alejandro? Strange to find you alone, for you always go together; you're like Castor and Pollux."

"And who might Castor and Pollux be?" asked Montellano.

"That's the firm name of a couple of Greek commission merchants," shouted Roberto, as he transferred an item from the day-book to the ledger.

Landáburo turned to his friends Polanco and Socarraz, with whom he established an animated and mysterious conversation. In the meantime Gacharnah, at the balcony window, was exhibiting to Montellano strips of blue and red cloth.

"As you have so many relations with the Government, I have come to propose a big deal together. . . . See what a good imitation this is, what a good appearance it presents. . . . This other cloth looks like the best goods turned out by Manchester. . . . We can send the order by cable. . . . Three words, and we'll thus effect the rapid shipment of twenty thousand yards of blue cloth and five thousand of red, for uniforms. Here's the code: *Gacharnah Brothers — Birmingham — Big Giant, bearded, judaizing.*"

Then, to throw the others off the track, and raising his voice:

"Have you received the wine, Don Ramón? It's the same as we took this afternoon at home. I have the label right here: OLD CHERRY—*Shipped expressly for Don Ramón Montellano—Colombia—Bogotá.*"

And in a low voice:

"There's another item even better than the cloth. . . ." And almost in Montellano's ear: "The armaments, the warships. I've got all that ready, too. A very cheap vessel, but of good appearance. . . . All you need do is send another cable: *persification*, and Gacharnah Brothers will send it to us at once. . . . Then, in case of war, there's the matter of foreign claims, in which some great deals can be made. For now, during peace, my dear Don Ramón, it's awful hard to make money; it takes long and hard work; while during war certain industries make huge profits, business is lucrative and easy, masterly strokes can be made and a fortune accumulated in no time. . . ."

"You're as wise as Solomon; but I'm really not interested in your proposals, my dear Gacharnah," replied Montellano. "I won't go into them, but those gentlemen over there," he added, with a laugh, pointing to the group formed by Landáburo, Socarraz and Polanco, "may be able to furnish you the war that you need in a short space of time,—at once, in fact,—if they are properly induced. Talk it over with them."

"I know, I know, Señor Montellano," exploded the stranger, "that for you, the revaluation party and the integridad party, peace and war, are all the same, for you are clever enough to turn any party and any man and any situation to your profit."

"My dear Mata," cried Landáburo, noticing the poet enter the room with his usual wearied, emaciated expression.

To-day the poet's eyes were moister than ever, his complexion unusually yellow and his gait less firm than ordinarily.

"I have come, Don Ramón, to propose a deal that will net you both honor and profit,—more honor than profit."

And noticing Montellano's annoyance and impatience, the poet continued languidly:

"I'd like to have you lend me a certain sum in order to bring out, in the United States, an edition of the first three volumes of my second series of poems: *Eternal Orient, The Song of my*

*Songs and Red Lines.* I permit myself to trouble you in this regard because I have such firm faith in your philanthropic nature and despite the fact that you know neither me nor my verses."

"And how do you expect me," asked Montellano, "to advance you money without knowing either you or your verses?"

"For that very reason," said Roberto, in a low voice.

"I have still another idea," continued Mata, unruffled. "That you sign this petition to the Government."

And Montellano read:

The undersigned, knowing and admiring the merit and the transcendent worth of the literary productions of Senor S. C. Mata, the most inspired among the poets of Spanish America, who breaking the old urns and the classic fetters has winged aloft to the Blue and beheld face to face the Sun of the eternal Harmony; a pure glory of the Latin race; an authentic genius, who is a hundred cubits above all living writers and comparable only to one or two of the dead; the only one who has been successful in gathering into a single sheaf the "jessamines of the Orient, the fragrance of the North, of the West, the dahlias and roses of the South"; the only one to whom "Pindar gave his famous rhythms and Anacreon his wines and honies,"—impelled by patriotic duty, manifest to the Government the necessity of publishing the works of this Colombian Homer, in order thus to honor letters, and place aloft the gold, the purple and the sapphire of our banner.

Landáburo, moved, not by patriotic impulse, but by his restless, susceptible vanity, stepped forward to be the first to sign.

"My name is known throughout America," he said. "It will serve you as a passport."

There followed the signatures of Montellano, Socarraz (*Chief director of The Scorpion*) and Polanco.

"I, too, will sign," uttered a stentorian, asthmatic voice that buzzed like a bumble-bee. "I, too, wish to help out this young man. I must get him to write a few verses for the inauguration of the Teaching Hospital."

Upon becoming aware of González Mogollón's presence, all fled, and the philanthropist, with his crane-like bald head, was left alone with the millionaire.

"I have brought you the statutes of the Teaching Hospital, as I offered to do. We already have a place and I hope you'll come to pay us a visit some afternoon. There are, so far, eight

inmates. . . . Just imagine: formerly they left the hospital without knowing how to earn a living. Our plan is that, when they are convalescing, they may begin to do something. In order to make the best use of their time during their illness, the members are teaching them. They study, particularly musical instruments, and hope to form a band. We have two chronic dyspeptics that play four-hand arrangements upon the piano, eight hours per day. Another convalescent who suffers from insomnia makes use of his time by learning the clarinet during the night. . . . We'll have a fine band. . . . Do you wish to read the list of contributors? ”

Montellano, without replying to González Mogollón's question, offered him construction materials for his work, on the condition that they would be paid for at once, in cash. Very soon they had concluded an arrangement by which Don Ramón realized a handsome profit. A very small part of this profit he donated as charity to the Teaching Hospital.

The rumbling, monotonous voice ceased to resound in Montellano's office, for González had withdrawn, but he soon came back from the staircase landing.

“ My friend, I forgot to show you the plans. ” And unrolling a packet of papers upon the desk, he continued: “ Here you have the lower floor. The great central corridor, with twenty-eight doors to the right and twenty-eight doors to the left. Here are the reception rooms. And here's the janitor's place. Opposite, the medical consulting-room. ”

Montellano yawned; he was hungry and bored; but the voice continued, inexorable, monotonous, like the sighing of the wind, like the beating of the waves, the dripping of water.

“ On the other side, a waiting room for the patients, a library for the professors, and then a library for the inmates. ”

“ Very good, fine, friend González; now I know all about it. We'll fix everything ship shape; I'm helping you out with construction material; what more do you wish? ”

But the fatiguing voice went on:

“ Here, where you see these blue lines, are the refectories, until you reach this green circle, which represents the central rotunda. These colored dots stand for the toilets, near the refectories, as in the *Beaujon* hospital. And here,— these black squares,— are the kitchens. . . . ”



All at once Montellano's countenance, which up to this moment had worn a harsh, dissatisfied expression, was bathed in a placid smile; the millionaire advanced joyously to the door. An odor of perfume invaded the room and the swish of silk was heard upon the carpet.

The newcomer was a tall, lively woman; full-faced, with just a trace of down upon her upper lip. Her eyes were large and sparkling, and she wore glasses from which hung a thin golden chain. Upon her bosom rested a brooch holding a miniature portrait of the great deceased, the *international revolutionist*, Tubalcain Cardoso. The woman was dressed in deep mourning, and the crape of her mantilla caused the whiteness of her skin to stand out by force of contrast.

"Only a moment," said Doña Aura as she entered. "I hope I am not disturbing you, Señor de Montellano. Feminism has made long strides in the nineteenth century, and woman has the privilege of presenting herself at any hour. Besides, since the death of Tubalcain"—and here she heaved a very deep sigh,— "I must shift for myself. Not without reason have some of my friends been pleased to call me a *man of letters*."

"Ah, señora, you don't know,—you don't know how glad I am to see you in this house. . . . Unfortunately you come so infrequently! . . ."

"I would come much oftener; but my duties do not permit it. *The Independent Woman* absorbs the greater part of my time. There are moments when I fear this head will burst."

The floor trembled anew and the bumble-bee buzzing sounded again. It was González returning hurriedly.

"I forgot," he gasped, "to explain to you where the kitchens with their Kneip mechanism would be placed. And I didn't show you the upper floor of the structure. . . ."

He stopped suddenly, bowed to Doña Aura, and went on:

"The upper story of the . . ."

"No more!" shouted Montellano. "Come back this afternoon, to-morrow, whenever you please."

"Good, then. This afternoon I'll expect you at the place without fail."

And he left.

In the meantime Doña Aura had extracted from her mesh-bag some galley proofs, and was preparing to read them aloud.

Montellano, whose face had flamed with anger because of González Mogollón's impertinent intrusion, turned to his visitor with a countenance that had regained its gentleness and its smile, and glanced in surprise at the strange slip of printed paper.

"This is a biography of you, Señor de Montellano, which will appear as an editorial in *The Independent Woman*, with the picture that you gave me a week ago. Just listen to the beginning:

"*The Independent Woman* to-day adorns its columns with the photograph of the distinguished gentleman, Doctor don Ramón de Montellano y Canasto, an honor and a distinction to the Republic,—an eminent personage in high finance, and a noted patron of Colombian letters. The place of his birth and the date of that felicitous occasion have nothing to do with the case: great men have neither age nor country. . . ."

Montellano breathed in delightedly, together with the waves of perfume that came from his visitor, the fumes of this incense, to which he was not accustomed, and he admired more and more the talent and the attractions of this woman who was arousing in him such deep emotion. She ceased her reading, looked into his eyes as if to surprise in them the effect of her flattery, and she divined the inner satisfaction that flooded Montellano's soul. Fearing that this so pleasant sensation might be dispelled, she did not care to continue, and said:

"This was only an impromptu, written down in a moment of inspiration. The Muses are very coy with me; but here are the proofs; I'll leave them with you to cut out or add whatever you please. I hope that you yourself will bring them back to me, so that I may have the pleasure of seeing you again. I'll read you some chapters from my new novel, not yet published, entitled *The King's Musketeer*, or *The Unmasked Virgins*. Do you like the name? I'll show you another, too, although I haven't yet hit upon a dénouement. We'll invent one together, won't we? It's called *The Palm of the Oasis*, or *A Drama in the Antarctic Pole*. . . . But you're so bashful. . . ." she said, casting a glance which she commented upon with a sigh. . . . "I'll await you without fail; I am sure that at your side I will be visited by the inspiration. . . . I shall be like the ivy protected by the elm. What a beautiful name for a novel: *The Elm and the Ivy*. . . ."

Montellano accompanied Doña Aura to the foot of the staircase; she leaned trustfully upon his arm. Roberto, who at this moment happened to come in from the street, noticed the contrast presented by the soft white hand of the poetess and the man's hard, rough, darkened hand, deformed by the ax, and which now, too, as Doña Aura left, closely slowly, like a claw, in an unconscious movement of possession.

Montellano was about to ask for lunch when he was intercepted by a person wrapped in a greenish cloak whence issued a wax-like face; the sides of the cloak bulged with the bundles that he carried under his arms.

"Señor Montellano, I am Gaspar Sánchez de Peñanegra, the inventor of several contrivances which will make the fortune of any one who helps me to exploit them. . . . But don't get impatient. . . . Permit me to place these books upon the table, and these plans. . . . Here is what is called the automatic heifer; see: this is the sucker . . ." (at this point he was seized with a fit of coughing). "Pardon me; now I can go on . . . it will be very short, so don't leave. . . . But you'll object to me that in order to give milk the cow needs the calf's sucking. . . . Well, that's just where this invention comes in: you hang this little clapper to the udder, and it tickles the cow, whereupon the cow kicks, the clapper strikes the udder, the sucker sucks and the milk spurts out in streams: you can see how cheap and how easy" (another fit of coughing). "Jesus, Mary! . . .

"There, there, I'm over with it. I have another invention, too, beet-root salt, but I don't wish to detain you any longer at present; allow me: I'll show you the great invention, which will enable you to duplicate your present fortune . . . let's get down to brass tacks . . . no talk before actual results . . . you are about to witness light extracted from darkness. . . . You laugh, don't you? . . . They laughed at Columbus, too — at Stephenson, the inventor of steam; yes, señor, light from darkness. . . . I'll take the apparatus out of this valise. . . . Ah! Very simple. . . . This cough will kill me. . . . I've been bothered with it for ten years, and only saltwort leaves afford me any relief; thank heaven it has passed. . . . Now I can go on. . . . Here you have these black spectacles. . . . I can go on, now. . . . Here you have this pair of black spectacles. . . . But don't move,— let me put them on for you. The ribbon's a little dirty?

. . . No matter. . . . So you don't believe in my theory? . . . You think it's impossible? . . . I have no time for explanations; I can see from your yawning that you must lunch pretty soon. . . . I'll simply say that I've discovered the origin of light: the luminous energy is nothing but falling, vibrating matter. . . . I have discovered *A* rays. In these spectacles, although you may not understand it at this moment, is found universal radio-activity; it is the bombardment of imponderable matter, yet ponderable none the less. All of this is clearer than the light you are going to behold if you allow me to put on these spectacles. . . . Do you agree? . . . Very well, and many thanks. . . . Lower your head just a trifle more. . . . You're so tall! . . . Your boil? . . . on your neck? . . . Don't worry. . . . I'll be very careful with it. . . . Do you see the importance of my invention? With a pair of spectacles like this in your pocket you can see three leagues away on the darkest night, just like with the searchlight of a battleship. As rich as you are, Señor Montellano, you haven't enough money to pay for this invention of mine. Allow me, now, to shut these windows. . . . Good! Can you see anything? . . . There goes that cough again. . . . A moment, please: there are some gratings that prevent complete darkness. . . . What was that that fell to the ground? . . . Ah! . . . It's an inkholder. . . . Now we are in complete darkness, in scientific obscurity, the obscurity of Papin, or Turquin and of Melin. . . . You don't see anything? . . . Let me adjust the glasses better. . . . But where are you? . . . There goes another inkholder. There, now I've found you; let me tighten the ribbon. . . . Stars? . . . Do you see stars? Now I'll tighen it more and the bombardment of light will be complete. . . . Pardon me, I've put my fingers into your mouth."

Montellano, who had lent himself to the experiment in hopes of issuing shares and starting a corporation, tore off the glasses and opened the window violently. A wave of light inundated the room and showed the millionaire in fury, staggering about, his face dotted with black stains and his tongue stuck out as far as it could reach, spitting out the astringent ink that filled his mouth.

## CHAPTER XII

## A MONUMENT TO THE LIVING

"PERUCHO, is Alejandro up yet?" asked Roberto of a boy with eyes as black as two jet beads, while, followed by his dog, he crossed the patio and walked toward the interior of the house.

"No, señor, not yet," answered the servant, who walked before him and opened the door to the stable.

A wave of warm atmosphere and the odor of hay enveloped them. Roberto, blinded by the light of the patio, could make out nothing. The coach sorrels were solemnly chewing away at their morning feed in the darkness. As the boy opened a crescent-shaped window the light struck the cruppers of the animals and under their lustrous hide could be made out the outlines of their strong muscles. In another compartment was *la Alondra* (the Lark), a black mare that Roberto was training for the *Sporting-Club's* races. The mare quivered nervously, tugged at the chain, and turned her head, upon which shone a white star.

Roberto stroked her neck and patted her back affectionately; *la Alondra* seemed to recognize him: her sparkling eye, as it turned, permitted a view of its cornea, which was streaked a light red.

In the meantime, Alejandro had just arisen in his room, which was hung with canvases. He had gone to bed late; all night long he had been unpacking the sculptures that he had brought from Europe, installing them in the salon, where he had his easel, works of art and various souvenirs. He opened one of the shutters of the window partly and a flood of light fell upon the carpet, and brought out from the rear of the room the huge old bed with the thick copper designs inlaid in the mahogany columns. Alejandro crossed the room; he passed to the painting salon and lay down upon a lounge.

In this state of lethargy there returned to him the images of other days, and in his artist's imagination, so keen and powerful that it brought back scenes and faces in all their detail and colors, as he passed his eyes over the sculpture and rested them upon a low relief before him, there came to life again all the scenes in which he had beheld Bertha. . . .

A large window cast the light upon the huge groups of sculptures, which assumed flesh-colored tints because of the reflection from the red damask curtains.

Alejandro for a long time lovingly contemplated The Monument to the Dead, which recalled to him the supreme instant of his life that he had wished to retain: that first meeting, on a Parisian spring morning, in the Palais de l'Industrie. As he arrived there innocently, with no other purpose than to pay the ordinary artist's visit, he little suspected that he was approaching a decisive moment in his life, and a place that he would never think of thereafter without deep emotion.

. . . And he saw once again the bustle of the spectators before the marble and the canvases. He recollected, precisely, in clear cut images, the series of salons which, when the curtains of the doors were raised, permitted a view of rows of pictures, immense historical scenes, spots of blood, landscapes, blue patches, recently varnished portraits, shining amid the bright gold of the frames, and bathed by that vernal light which, sifted through the glass, fell from the crystal roof. Through these galleries which he had visited a hundred times and which he found almost deserted, since the day for the closing was fast approaching, he had been wandering wearily. . . . He left the portrait salon, before the pictures of which the visitors, planted with the knobs of their canes in their mouths, stood in ecstasy, uttered the names of some of the models and recognized the singers of the Opera Comique. . . . Emma Calvé, in the costume of *Carmen*. Under the wide staircase he proceeded to the statuary salons, and there, once again, he felt a strange fascination, an astonishing seduction, before the sculpture of Bartolomé called *To the Dead*. The work represented the colossal façade of a sepulcher, a high, narrow door leading to the interior of a crypt; at each side, two groups stirring upon the threshold of Eternity, advance, on their knees, prostrated, or on foot, in accordance with their agony, their resignation or their hope. . . . He was standing thus, oblivious to time, contemplating that work, when of a sudden a gentle perfume caused him to turn around; beside him he heard a voice of musical quality which reached to the very depths of his soul; he beheld two women of most distinguished appearance who were commenting upon the sculptures. One of them, the younger, with her eyes distended

in admiration, was pointing to the lower part of the monument, — to a deep niche in the interior of the crypt, where lay a couple with their hands clasped in the peace of death, while an angel filled with tenderness and sadness descended and kneeled at their side, her arms open like two protecting wings, veiling their eternal sleep in the semi-gloom of the sepulcher.

“Ah! . . . Yes,” exclaimed the younger, “this is where the artist desired to crystallize his thought: this angel is the explanation of the drama, the symbol of immortality and hope.” And in these words it seemed to Alejandro that he had discovered a profound feeling. . . . For a long time the women remained in silent contemplation of the monument, and he, in the meantime, remained ecstatically contemplating that woman. And he felt that a strange sensation, a new passion, the infinity of love, was penetrating forever into his heart. There was an air of grandeur about her,— of majesty, of noble breeding, an ideal pallor, and a pair of blue eyes in which swam a mysterious anxiety: the incurable homesickness of the exiled. Her voice sounded like sad music, stirring the soul, which was moved as by tears.

There then unrolled before Alejandro’s eyes scenes and landscapes in which he beheld her once again: the walk . . . that reception at the French Embassy, the ball in the Palace, where at last he was able to speak to her. . . . Always the same melancholy, the passion for the unattainable, that feeling which enabled them to understand each other. . . . That night at the ball, although they had been conversing for but a few moments, she gave him to understand the weariness of a soul that seeks rest and infinite happiness in vain. He recalled how he had then plumbed the depths of his own soul and understood that he, too, was an insatiable spirit, a seeker after happiness, ill with an indefinable nostalgia. . . .

Then, Jerusalem, the Holy Sepulcher, the entrance to the sanctuary, and in the gloom, amid the odors and the clouds of incense, a sigh. She . . . bowed before the Sepulcher, with her lips pressed to the sacred stone. . . . Afterward? . . . After a year, two, three, in which time she had disappeared without leaving a trace, the unexpected meeting on board the trans-Atlantic liner *La Touraine*. The Sister of Charity:

Bertha among them! . . . She was already Sister San Ligorio. The expression of mysterious anguish had already vanished, and instead, her blue pupils shone with an ineffable serenity, a sad gentleness. . . . Together again! . . . That woman, whom Destiny had again brought to him, was to have a decisive influence upon his existence.

A knock on the door aroused Alejandro from his day-dreams. The servant came in.

“Señor Bellegarde.”

“Show him in.”

Alejandro hurriedly arranged his clothes; he crossed several rooms and reached the gallery.

“Ah! Friend Bellegarde, you must excuse me. I got up very late; was busy all night putting in order the sculptures that I brought from France; I had not unpacked them until now, through sheer laziness.”

They crossed several salons filled with antiquities, in which there floated the mingling odors of Cordovan leather and pungent camphor, from the old brocade. From the faded velvet cases arose vague essences that evoked recollections of colonial loves and refinements. On the walls, side by side, were strips from the banners of the Conquest, soft gorgets, wagtails, dented helmets, iron gauntlets and coats of mail, dulled by the centuries.

Clay idols with crossed legs smiled stupidly out of the shadow of the corners. The gaunt saints, painted by Vásquez, grew paler still amid the gold glints from the furniture and the garnet of the damask curtains. Here and there darted a flash from some lances and halberds.

The Count's expert glance fell upon the immense flowers of the carpet and passed along the walls bedecked with paintings and silk stuffs, the inlaid escritorios, the high-back chairs. He observed the harmony of the ebony and the ivory, the tortoise-shell and the gold, the silver and the velvet,—the refined ensemble of rare, splendid, dark objects that time had passed over with a caress.

A close friendship had sprung up between Alejandro and the Count as Roberto had foreseen, because of their artistic tastes, the sympathy between their hildago-like characters and their



seigniorial instincts, their conception of life according to which esthetic preoccupations held a higher place than mercantile affairs.

"I received your letter yesterday, together with the value of your shares," said Bellegarde, seating himself in an ample armchair such as may be seen in a chancel, and resting his hands upon the red arms. Then, adjusting his monocle and taking out a telegram which he handed to Alejandro, he continued:

"The canalization shares, as you see, have doubled in value on the Brussels Exchange. . . . The enterprise has roused enthusiasm. . . . I must return to the Magdalena at once; two steamers are coming up the river for us, and twenty dredgers. . . . You'll come along with me, won't you? . . ." Then, after a pause: "Yesterday I purchased from Montellano all the cultivated land on the banks of the river; he got ahead of us, but we simply had to acquire those lands, which the Company must own for the purpose of colonization. I also made an arrangement that I fear will displease you: I gave Socarraz a position in the work."

Alejandro made a gesture of annoyance and astonishment. Bellegarde went on:

"At bottom I'm not opposed to giving work and money to anybody who is willing to do his share. Perhaps in this way we may steer many clear of the wrong road and the revolutionary ideas through which they seek prosperity and fortune by means of an overturn. We must, even at the cost of many sacrifices and with whatever means we have at our disposal, oppose war, which is the only serious enemy of the enterprise."

And after another pause, he continued:

"I was to see that painting of the Magdalen that they attribute to Guido; I'm rather inclined to believe that it's the work of the Spanish painter, Carreño. This picture has a remarkable resemblance to another Magdalen by the same artist, which I saw at the Museum of St. Petersburg."

He arose and walked to another salon, in which Alejandro had his studio.

"How's the portrait of President Borja getting along?"

In the center of the salon was the easel, upon which rested

a canvas of generous dimensions, scarcely touched; opposite was a suit of armor, of burnished steel.

"You know the theme," said Alejandro. "It's the moment in which the Archbishop Arias de Ugarte hands over to President Borja the data and the plans of amelioration that he has gathered on his pastoral visit."

"Magnificent! I can just imagine how well you'll treat the contrast between the cloth of the episcopal vestments and the glint from the burnished steel; the ascetic pallor of the prelate and the fiery, proud traits of his warrior predecessor. But, wouldn't it be better to complete those sketches of yours that I christened PAX?" And he turned to one of the numerous sketches that hung on the walls. "Here's the first sketch," he said, pointing to two small canvases. "There are many happy details and light effects."

Near the two small canvases was a slightly larger one, representing an old country house, and in the fore ground, a group of which only the heads were barely designed.

"This is done *con amore*," observed Bellegarde, turning an inquiring glance upon Alejandro.

"I tried to copy," answered the latter, "an old family photograph. It's the house at *Cebaderos* which I sold to Montellano." And he wrinkled his forehead in token of the unpleasant thoughts his statement had summoned. "I tried to preserve the old country house of the Borjas' on the canvas, at least. . . . Can't you see? Here are the three: aunt Teresa, aunt Ana, my father. . . ."

The Count withdrew and Alejandro began to paint.

Shortly afterward, Roberto appeared, followed closely by Perucho, who carried a stone slab.

"I have a surprise for you; a stupendous discovery."

Alejandro did not even turn to look at him, but sat back to note the effect of a brush stroke.

"Did you meet Bellegarde? He just left." And leaning over toward the palette: "He showed me a cablegram which says that the shares have doubled in value."

Roberto stopped before the canvas, and after observing it a moment, said:

"It's getting along finely, but I don't like those touches. The armor, although it presents very elegant curves, affords

you no opportunity for revealing the wealth of your palette, your knowledge of color, which you manage so skilfully. Instead of this monotonous armor, so cold and uniform, I would attire our ancestor Borja in the trappings which the master Velázquez put on the Marquis de Spínola in his canvas of the Lances. Remember? . . . It's such a noble, brilliant, harmonious piece of work. Black armor dotted with gold, a lace collar, a pink sash, gauntlets, a black hat with a white plume. . . . But, just look at my surprise: the stone which President Borja placed on the bridge of San Francisco. I found it yesterday among a collection of antiquities which has just been put on sale."

Alejandro laid his brushes aside and drew near to examine the stone.

"You're fortune's pampered child," he exclaimed. "I've been looking for this ten years. And where is this sale? We must go there at once."

Alejandro placed the stone upon a table, brought some water, and washed it so that he might reconstruct, letter by letter, the inscription that had been corroded by the centuries. Then he took Roberto by the arm and gently pushing him toward the museum-salon, he said:

"Come along. Now let me show you *my* surprise."

They both paused before the statues; Roberto drew near, while Alejandro, leaning against the door jamb, gave himself up anew to his recollections and to his sorrows.

"So this is your great surprise!" exclaimed Roberto. "I saw fragments of this group in Paris; the simplicity of the style and the depth of the sentiment revealed a great artist, and how anxious I was to see the work completed!" And he returned to grasp the whole, to penetrate the artist's meaning, the complete thought of the sculptor.

"Look, Roberto; what moves me most is this central group: these two figures, the couple entering the sepulcher. Standing out against the mysterious darkness, the young woman leans her hands against the shoulder of her companion as if to give him courage. Observe this movement of the arm, this attitude so full of tenderness and resignation which imparts to the couple on their entrance into eternity a sad, moving solemnity."

He returned to his easel and continued painting. He looked at his model attentively, that he might wrest from the light its secrets and its wonders. Soon he paused to study an unforeseen effect.

"Just come over here; the sun, too, wished to bring me a surprise; if I were to paint this, they'd say I had falsified nature, that I had made light lie."

A bright sunbeam, breaking against the prism of a chandelier, had stained the breastplate of the armor as with a spot of blood.

"Which will prove to the critics," exclaimed Roberto, admiring this strange light effect, "that reality surpasses fiction; that the practical life is really the life of the dreamers and poets. . . . But I've found another surprise: the fiscal Avila, who came from Guatemala to the Audience of Santa Fé."

The iridescent light had vanished; Alejandro continued to study the reflections from the steel and tried the colors on his palette. He seemed to be conversing with the suit of armor.

"This is very important to me," said Roberto. "For doubtless, as may be seen from the energy of the expression, the life in the eyes, this picture was made from the living original and not from the dead, as appears easily from the one I have at home."

He bent over to read the inscription at the foot of the painting:

THE MOST EXCELLENT SENOR DON MELCHOR DE AVILA  
Y CASTILLO, CABALLERO. GRAND CROSS OF THE ROYAL  
AUDIENCIA OF SANTA FE DE BOGOTA, NEW KINGDOM  
OF GRANADA, CAME TO THIS ROYAL AUDIENCIA FROM  
GUATEMALA IN 1702 AND WAS ITS PRESIDENT.

"This ancestor of yours resembles you much more closely than the one you have at home," replied Alejandro, turning his head. "He has your eyes, and the same bulging forehead as the Avilas."

"That's how I imagined Don Melchor when I wrote his biography for the *Santa Fé Illustration*."

"Permit me to correct you! . . . When you wrote the first part, for the second still remains to be seen. Everybody asks

me for the continuation of your historical articles, and the second part of the famous biography."

"Second parts were never good; don't ask me to write any more, for it isn't worth the trouble."

"I deny that! What a fresh, living picture you drew of those times of love and blood, in which people really loved and hated each other! How well you evoked those conquistadores, who were half saint and half bandit, and those brave, romantic judges; and as you progressed with your pictures of barricades in the streets and serenades at the foot of the window-gratings, you were doing a genuinely modern study, of deep yet pleasant analysis! . . ."

"Look!" interrupted Roberto, "if it should ever occur to you to write *my* biography, I'll be satisfied to have you write only the first part."

Alejandro laid his palette upon the floor, put aside the brushes and arising precipitously, stopped before Roberto and placed his hands upon his friend's shoulders.

"Agreed!" he exclaimed, revealing his animation in the glow of his pupils, the color of his cheeks and the timbre of his voice. "I will be your biographer, and I will write as follows: 'He was a man of great genius, of delicate and artistic feelings, of vast culture; but he lacked energy, will-power, the ability to follow up things; he had initiative, but he lacked constancy; he enjoyed life, but had no ambition; he studied more than enough to graduate, yet never got his doctor's degree; he was a valiant soldier, and with his advice helped to win victory, yet he never advanced higher than a mummery captain; he had a clear conception of things; he made the best possible adviser, but never profited by his own learning. . . .' Now don't interrupt me. . . . 'He began a translation of Faust, and interpreted several scenes in a masterly fashion, yet never could get himself to complete an act; he left unfinished historical studies for which he had gathered full data at the cost of much labor. He wrote short biographies as well as sonnets that Nuñez de Arce would be proud to sign . . . if Nuñez would sign sonnets lacking their final tercets.'"

"Bravo! You're grooming yourself for the Senate."

"Allow me to finish! The best is yet to come! You've

gone everywhere scattering your ideas and your inspirations and your discoveries, which others have taken advantage of. You've won battles for Ronderos and executed profitable transactions for Montellano, without yourself becoming either a general or a millionaire."

"*Oui, ma vie ce fut d'etre celui qui souffle, et qu'on oublie.*"

"Ah! If you're starting those quotations from Cyrano de Bergerac again, we'll never get through. I've already told you that the best is yet to come."

He grasped Roberto's lapel tightly, with his habit of convincing, hypnotizing, dominating by violent affection, and his blue eyes lit up with flame.

"You simply *must* finish that translation of Faust, your colonial studies, your sonnets and that idyll that you've begun."

And now he pressed his friend's arm. "Don't deny it; it's an idyll; continue with it, and none of your analyzing and vacillating. Make up your mind once and for all, and let me be your best man at your wedding with Dolores Montellano."

"I, marry? . . . It's well, when God sends us a chronic ailment, to endure it with resignation and patience. . . . But to go looking for it?"

"Enough of your jests. Give up this habit of taking nothing seriously."

"I forget what serious author wrote that habits must be most considerately treated, especially if they are bad habits."

"You must settle down, raise a family, and know the joy of a home. . . . Less fancies, less bohemianism . . . and more positive, solid happiness. . . . Don't interrupt me. . . . I know that you're going to tell me that I have no right to preach, that I myself have been unable to settle down; but that's just why I can serve as teacher here. A master in hidden sadness, in life's nullity, a master of loneliness."

"Ah! Yes. You are very, very fond of loneliness in good company."

"You need more stability, an inner life."

"Inner? . . . Yes, I understand; what you want me to do is to make a Teniers interior; to immortalize you, brush in hand, by affording you an opportunity to copy my joyous

scene: six drooling kids, a chubby-cheeked wife, a cart loaded with hay, the fireplace, ten casks of beer, and plenty of quiet with a pile of Holland cheese."

"Frankly," interrupted Alejandro in a serious tone, "you have undertaken a kind of sport which I never taught you, despite my bad reputation. For you have awakened in Dolores certain refinements, literary tastes, and the desire to cultivate her mind, to learn incessantly. . . . You know it,—those eight hours of daily study are all through you and for you; this unwearying effort, this devotion to study, the anticipation of your desires, are proof of an affection which, in all frankness, you don't deserve."

"But have you seen those hands,—those short and wide hands that recall the rapacious hands of Montellano? Have you seen her hair?"

"Magnificent black tresses."

"There, now! You haven't learned how to see; you're like that artist who said, 'To-day I look, to-morrow I'll see.' But I have observed, looked and seen. Those magnificent black tresses in the full light show the cinnamon glints of monkey fur. With all her father's millions she still bears the ineradicable mark of the tropical suns, of the open-air life, of the inclement weather, of the wild life among mountains and pampas. With all these handicaps of ancestry will she ever learn the usefulness of the useless? When will she be convinced that the purpose of life is art, as Bellegarde puts it? And even should she learn all this, her father's millions are a heap of money; they'd weigh me down as if they were coined upon my shoulders; I'd feel their molten metal pouring down my throat."

"Well, then, Landáburo gave the key to your happiness the other night. He's preparing a bill for the next legislature, carrying his socialistic theories into practice. 'Reduction of capital; abolition of inheritances.' . . . That'll make your Lola a poor girl, which is what you seem to wish. . . . Or is it aristocratic desires you're cherishing; a matter of pedigree, parchments and letters patent of nobility?" . . . And with a loud laugh, bowing with mock ceremony, he added: "The Count del Risco y de Cahahalso, lord of las Navas y Villafranca, *tes autres titres don Juan*. . . . How well those

pictures of Hernani would portray you." And pointing in theatrical manner to one of the canvases upon the wall: "*Celui des Silva fut l'ainé.* Ha! Ha! Ha! Why, see here: you know very well that my rights to the dukeship of Gandía and to the marquisate of Lombay are most genuine. Well, I yield, convey, deliver and transfer them to Dolores. . . . Besides, you forget that she is a marquess of intelligence and charm, duchess of beauty, princess of love."

"That last title is enough for me. Parchments, nobiliary titles, purity of ancestry, deeds of legitimacy, Christianity and nobility,—I require all these absolutely, but not from Dolores. I ask these from Montellano's millions; I don't care to contract a misalliance with *them.*"

"The origin of that wealth? It lies in those very cinnamon features that so horrify you. You have seen in them a stigma; to me they are a wreath, not surely the wreath of laurel nor the wreath of oak, but the wreath of gold that is bestowed upon intelligent labor. I aspired to intertwine your somewhat withered count's wreath with this other one. I wished to infuse new blood into our race and to return to the Avilas their ambition, their audacity, their energy; I wished to erase half of our motto, thus improving it,—to take away the word *grief* and leave only *glory.* . . . Marry for money,—that's bad! But to throw over a charming maiden who's in love with you just because she's rich,—that's worse! As for Montellano, the ocean wouldn't be wide enough to separate him from you. I haven't told you the latest trick he played on me, nor shall I tell you. . . . In short, I don't insist. . . . What's certain, if you don't intend to marry Dolores, is that you should flee the house,—keep away. Don't make matters worse. Dolores has been soft clay that you've modelled with your artist's hands; you have instilled in her your refined tastes, you've given her the desire to learn, to distinguish herself; you have opened infinite horizons to her mind, you have given her wings, and now that you see her high up among her ideals, are you going to let her fall and smash to bits against her previous commonplace existence? Have you filled her soul with delicacy and illusions only to give yourself the pleasure of having her feel a void when you've gone, of having her weep, of having her die for love of you? Have you lifted her



to the heights only to let her fall and be destroyed like Simon the Magus? . . . The deuce!"

"Be calm, Faust; you're exaggerating everything and making a tragedy of it. You know how my nerves are on edge from that wicked yellow that they've smeared all over my house; you know how I suffer from the sight of this swarm of money-grubbers, this den of vileness. But Montellano, he's such a joke to me! . . . Flee this place, leave it forever, plan flight? . . . No, don't ask of my will any more than you know it can perform; since I can't measure, or calculate, or foresee consequences, let me continue as at present; let me see some tithe of nobility where so much strikes me as being ridiculous; let me inhale the fragrance of this new rose in the former home of my family; let me watch this chrysalis be transformed into a butterfly."

"You paint yourself blacker than you are. You can't be so callous to evil, you can't enjoy the writhings of your victim; it would be a refinement of cruelty that would clash with your other refinements. Fortunately, what is at the bottom of your repugnance is your former affection of Inés; too bad that you think of her only when you feel in danger of losing her. You're too sure of the retreat. . . . Take care! Bellegarde is teaching her how to care, for he knows how to love. He may cut off your retreat."

"Inés?" said Roberto. "Why, she's a sphinx, and you know my aversion for hieroglyphics . . . even for the most beautiful of them. . . . So prudent, so cold, and I need to be loved with passion, with furore. . . . Even her smile is silent."

"Happy he who shall decipher the enigma of that sphinx, — he who shall interpret these hieroglyphics, he who makes that silence speak. . . . Unhappily, you will not be he."

Roberto had begun to fiddle with the various objects upon one of the tables; he picked them up, changed their places; then he drew closer to Alejandro, with a sinister air.

"Once for all, do you really wish to know why I don't take the definitive, irrevocable step? . . . It's because I've lost faith in the outcome. . . . I'm afraid . . . afraid of life. It's taught me so many things,—me and mine. . . . I feel certain that everything that comes into my hands,—prestige, fortune, wealth,—will decline, evaporate." (He had become

grave, and was speaking in a low voice.) "Knowing me, knowing that I am useless for struggle, that I shall allow myself to be conquered by fate, do you believe it would be loyal of me, or generous, or gentlemanly, to make my companion share my unhappy lot? I am man enough to receive fortune's blows with a smile, but it would kill me not to be able to shield Dolores or Inés from them."

Alejandro took his friend by the arm and placed him anew before the statues, as, with a voice in which his emotion clearly vibrated, he exclaimed:

"To die without having loved is to die without having lived. This monument is not only to the dead; it is a monument, a lesson, to the living. The sculptor tried to concentrate attention upon this pair in the middle, advancing full of vigor and determination toward eternity. Look at that marriage which scares you: these two beings who found themselves amid the vastness of existence, multiplied their joys a hundredfold and lightened their burdens by their life together. She is part of her husband's soul, his bravery, and he summons his strength to protect his companion, seeking in love the secret and the source of his energies. Leaning upon each other they enter the sepulcher with firm step, just as they have walked through life, hand in hand, smiling and happy. What you see here is truth, power, the answer to your discouragement."

Then, with a stifled voice, as if speaking to himself, he continued: "All the rest is a lie, an irreparable mistake." He sank into a chair and leaned his head against his hands. "Despair!"

## CHAPTER XIII

### HORTICULTURE

"You promised the Sisters that you would visit them today."

"Let's go, then, if you insist."

Roberto was accustomed to his friend's attacks of spleen, of ill humor, which Alejandro called his black hours. But these sudden impulses, which revealed griefs hidden deep in

the recesses of Alejandro's soul, filled Roberto with pained surprise. Knowing that the secret must be impenetrable, he held aloof, silent. After a long pause, Roberto, wishing to rouse his friend from his gloomy and bitter thoughts, had proposed a little trip, anything to get out of the rut and bestir himself,—a visit to the recently installed establishment.

After passing through narrow lanes, climbing rough passes and rocky places, skirting along the river, crossing plowed land and little squares, they saw before them the white belfry behind a clump of trees.

"Do you see it? . . . We have arrived at last. Did that hill tire you? You're getting very stout."

"It's not I that's tired. It's you," observed Alejandro as he noticed Roberto pale and panting.

They had come to a precipice at the bottom of which the river flowed, and they turned down a pass; soon they had reached a place that seemed to belong to another district and to another century: the solitary square, the shining bell-tower, the whitened wall-fences, over which peered and swayed the orchard foliage.

"How out of harmony all your correctness is!" commented Roberto, stopping and barring Alejandro's way. "How all this *West End* chicness of yours clashes with the surroundings, — your Fuchs shoes, this Greek medallion on your pendant, this Poole suit, this shining hat,—in this quite little square that's as austere as a patio of the Carthusian monastery. . . . How ill they harmonize with this silence, this solitude, this remote corner that speaks of forgetfulness, of poverty, of withdrawal and penitence! . . ."

Alejandro made no immediate reply to the jesting comment, as he was absorbed in the tranquillity that surrounded him.

"Yes, indeed; this seems to bathe my soul."

They crossed the plazuela, knocked timidly at a door which was situated at the foot of the bell-tower. At this juncture the figure of Doctor Miranda appeared on the square; his long black cape stood out against the shining whiteness of the wall.

"Hello, Roberto! You here?" he exclaimed, with a certain surprise. "And you, Alejandro? . . . You?"

He knocked familiarly at the door; the face of the Sister

door-keeper appeared for a moment, then disappeared as she went to lift the latch. They entered. The outer passageway was dark, and there was a damp odor, which mingled with the mystic perfume of a bunch of flowers that adorned the image of the Virgin, before which burned the languid flame of a lamp. At the end of the passageway shone a square patio with a white arcade, half in light and half in the shade.

They were greeted by Mother Paulina, a woman of indefinite age, but of virginal freshness, with an eternal smile beneath her linen hood. She smiled familiarly at Doctor Miranda, then cast an inquiring glance at the visitors.

"Mother," spoke Alejandro, "don't you recall that we were traveling companions?"

The nun's expression changed.

"Ah! . . . Yes, yes, it's Monsieur Alejandro. . . . I remember. Do you wish to visit our establishment?" asked the nun with a French accent, lingering upon the final syllables. "The girls aren't working now. . . . It's almost eleven o'clock."

In the center of the patio, in double file, with their backs toward the visitors, stood the little girls; now and then they would turn their restless heads in the direction of the newcomers, and whisper with the hum of innocence and happiness.

"I am sorry that you didn't find them at work at their distaffs. They're on their way to the refectory now; but they'll soon return."

The bell sounded. The rows of children marched forward, crossing the patio. Alejandro noticed that, as they passed from the shadow to the sunlight the little black heads cast blue reflections, while the blond tresses shone with a halo-like glow.

All was silent. The visitors, preceded by the mother, entered the printing-shop, a long, dark room the roof of which was covered with paper strips of various colors; before the cases and the presses they saw several robust, neat young girls wearing large aprons of coarse fiber. The mother had them execute certain tasks, explaining that the installation of the printery had been due to the efforts of González Mogollón, who came to visit them every day and fill them with enthusiasm. The bell sounded again; out came the girls, filling the patio and the galleries with fresh childish laughter; the colors of their

dresses, the silk of their hair and the pink of their cheeks shone in the sun; and amid a whir as of bees returning to their hive they ran to their posts under the arcade and began the tric-trac of the looms, the humming of their distaffs. The row of distaffs, turned by rhythmic movements of the children's feet, revolve as one and the locks of wool grow thinner and longer, into threads that the agile little fingers twine around amid the rhythmic noises; there is a confusion of whiteness,—the brightness of the arcade, the soft tones of the wool, the immaculate cloths of the loom, the embroidery frames and the snow-white of the hoods that float, flutter, and go hither and thither amid this hum of labor, youth and happiness.

"Look, Faust," whispered Roberto, while the mother left them for a moment to examine the design on one of the looms. "Look at these distaffs, these Marguerites. . . . Do you remember? . . . Faust's dream as given by Irving at the Lyceum!"

Alejandro frowned slightly and dismissed the irreverent notion.

"None of that, my boy. Rather look at this detail: that distaff, that neck, that extended arm. Some such model as this inspired in Velázquez the admirable neck and the magnificent arm of his *Las Hilanderas*." (The Spinners.) And then, with a voice of mingled affection and severity he added:

"You know that at the Pole everything is the color of snow, — even the wolves and the bears. In Muzo everything is green, from the emeralds to the butterflies. . . . Here, thought should be colored by the predominating hue: white."

"Shall we look over the orchard?" asked the mother, returning to them with an obliging air.

They ascended the stone staircase at the foot of which some girls were embroidering; they passed by the dormitory and entered the sewing room. Above the tables creaked the shears, tearing into the cloths, which parted noisily; with their backs to a window a group of maidens was at work, and behind them, drenched in sunlight, could be seen the orchard; beyond this lay the green distance of la Sabana. They crossed the corridors again and then descended a dark flight of stairs which creaked at every step.

"*Preneze garde: il y a dix marches*<sup>1</sup> . . ."

The nun returned and the visitors went into the orchard.

A sensation of coolness and peace, the scent of lilies and sweet basil, the murmurs of an invisible spring that glided along among the shrubbery, the melody of the wind that made the treetops sway, the trilling of the birds, surrounded them, penetrated them, touched their souls like a language of mystery and tenderness, with the religious accents of a bygone age.

The sun, causing the orange leaves to glitter, drenching the banner of a *curubo*, and caressing the leaves of the fig-trees, reached the ground and played about in meshes of light and shade, making the white silhouettes stand out in relief against the dark green of the foliage. Two Sisters were going back and forth silently, and while one gathered flowers the other let fall from the watering pot a curved stream which, in a rainbow-colored cascade dropped gently upon the leaves and the soil which it darkened.

Hearing the sound of trampled leaves in the path, the two Sisters turned their heads. Sister Visitación, red as a poppy from the heat and her efforts, put the watering pot to one side, shook her black apron and dried her hand. Sister San Ligorio, placing several bunches of flowers upon a stone bench advanced several steps toward the visitors. Then, in the middle of the path, covered by a shaded light, she stopped short.

The two friends, catching sight of her, removed their hats; Alejandro stepped back, bowed his head reverently, in deep respect; it was as if, although he had remained standing, he had prostrated himself and in spirit was touching the dust with his forehead. Roberto, as at *El Consuelo*, observed the Sister with profound admiration.

The same ineradicable seal of nobility; the same solemn sadness. Her fascinating pupils revealed an intense inner life. Mystic devotion covered her wan face with alabastrine whiteness and seeming transparency.

Bouquets of white roses, bunches of lilies, overflowing her apron, covered her bosom, touched her neck, and kissed her hands.

"Look, Alejandro, at this symphony in white."

<sup>1</sup> French. "Take care; there are ten steps."

Alejandro, with an imperceptible frown, revealed the annoyance of one who hears a discordant note in the midst of a beautiful chord,—a note that intrudes upon the silence of meditation. Roberto continued:

“A veritable vision; the dream of a Christian artist realized in marble.”

Alejandro mastered his emotions. He assumed a natural, carefree air.

“It is not the first time,” he said to Roberto, as they walked along the path, “that I see her thus covered with flowers. . . . Three . . . no, four years ago, at Nice, in the battle of flowers . . . her carriage was the best decorated; all white, — all lilies, as now.”

The two friends bowed and Doctor Miranda advanced; the Sister bowed likewise.

“Do you like so many flowers?” asked the Sister. “It’s the month of flowers, you know,—the month of the Virgin.”

“Sister,” said Roberto, plucking a lily, “you recall to our minds that landscape of your compatriot Montalembert. . . . A relative of yours, I believe? . . . in which Saint Isabel appears with the roses. . . .”

“Man,” interrupted Alejandro, “don’t talk such nonsense before the Sisters and Sebastian. It was not Saint Isabel. It was . . . that converted Moorish princess . . . who was surprised by her father in the act of carrying bread to the Christians. And when the irate parent opened her apron there fell to the ground a shower of roses.”

“Not at all! It was Saint Isabel,” replied Roberto, half seriously and half in irony. “What do you know about it? . . . You looked at the painting and made up the story yourself. . . . You settle the question for us, Sebastian. Let Peter speak!”

“Do you really wish to know the truth, gentlemen? Do you wish me to settle the controversy? How delightful it would be to give a verdict that would please both sides. Well, it was Saint Isabel whose loaves of bread turned to roses.”—And as he sniffed his snuff with each nostril, and rubbed his fingers, he contemplated Roberto’s satisfaction.

“I’ve won, Alejandro.”

“And the same thing happened to a converted Mooress, ac-

ording to a pious tradition of Andalusia," added Doctor Miranda, this time contemplating Alejandro's triumphant smile.

"The sale of these flowers at times produces enough for the maintenance of our poor little children," observed Sister San Ligorio in her melodious voice. "It's the opposite of the miracle that happens here: the roses are transformed into bread." And bowing, she crossed the path, reached the door . . . and the white vision disappeared.

Sister Visitación invited them to walk about the place and see the little wonders she had worked. They skirted some lettuce beds, then proceeded to a strip of land cut by black furrows that bristled with stakes bearing names inscribed upon white cards. The doctor, attracted by the Latin, bent over to decipher the writing.

"Septium . . . Trifolium frangiferum . . . Spercula arvensis . . . Panem germanicum. . ."

"Ah!" exclaimed Sister Visitación as the Doctor read the last name aloud, "that is my great conquest; it is the *Moha* of Hungary . . . poor little thing . . . its seed sprouts easily, even where drought has dried up all other species."

Alejandro, who had remained taciturn, attempted to feign interest in the Sister's explanation, and passed his hand over the ear of the *Moha*.

"No, Monsieur Alejandro," exclaimed the Sister, arching her brows in fright and joining her hands in supplication. "Don't touch it, for you'll ruin everything."

They continued the rounds of the orchard; in one corner, with its decoration of white roses stood a kiosk, whence came noisy laughter. Roberto, hastening toward it, saw a nun seated upon a stone bench.

She was a spectral figure,—a white mummy; she seemed hewn out of a block of ice; from her eyes, in which her entire existence had taken refuge, flashed sparks that betrayed her surprise, even horror, as if Roberto were brandishing a knife.

"This is Sister San Bernardo," murmured Doctor Miranda in a low voice. "She never breaks the silence except with these hysteric laughs, without a gesture, without a contraction of her facial muscles. She dwelt in Agua de Dios, among lepers, for ten years. . . . They brought her here . . . like this . . . crazy."



They continued their walk in silence, deeply moved by their encounter with the unexpected apparition; in the shadow of the wall they noticed a patch of enclosed earth upon which might be made out the imprint of an aristocratic foot, and here, amid a veritable explosion of springtide there quivered in the breeze a bed of lilies.

Doctor Miranda bent down again to read the inscriptions.

“*Lirium paneracium . . . Amarillis farmensis . . . Amarillis formosina. . .*”

Sister Visitación thrust forth her under lip and her frank features portrayed her supreme disdain.

“Ta, ta, ta. . . These are merely whims of Sister San Ligorio’s. . . What a deal of trouble for nothing! . . . Useless plants. . . Do you like them, Doctor? . . . Then let me explain: this is the Guernsey lily, so-called. It comes originally from Japan, but so naturalized did it become upon the island of Guernsey that it grows there in abundance. They flourish only once, and that’s why our Sister is so fond of them. They give buds like this here,—cerese color,—filled with venturin. . . This other one is the ‘Santiago lily,’ the cross of Calatrava. . . See this bud that’s about to open, Señor Alejandro. . . What pains it has cost! . . . It is cultivated in earth because it can’t bear manure; and its flower, which is this ruby velvet streaked with gold dust, represents the heraldic lily, the French fleur-de-lis. It lasts only five or six days, and the cold kills it. . . The Sister adores it! . . . When they are about to blossom she takes them to her room. . . Just take a look yonder; that square window filled with lilies.”

And on the high stone wall they could see the flower pots filled with lilies that peered through the iron bars and swayed their white and red chalices to the afternoon breezes.

“You knew Sister San Ligorio in Europe, did you not, Alejandro, before she entered this order?” asked Doctor Miranda.

“It seems to me,” said Roberto, “that I heard you say you met her in your travels to the Orient.”

They strolled along silently, enveloped by the odor of the humid soil; their footsteps were heard upon the gravel of the path and upon some dried leaves. Inquiring glances were

turned upon Alejandro, who, with an effort, began to speak in that same muffled, melancholy tone with which he had spoken to Roberto that very morning.

"In Jerusalem, in the temple of the Holy Sepulcher, under the immense cupola shone the colored marbles in the light of the candles and the silver lamps; the sanctuary, which is set like a jewel in the midst of the temple, is divided into two compartments. I waited in the first for my turn to enter. . . . Whereupon somebody came out, stopping in the low doorway, and I was able to penetrate into the very abode of the Holy Sepulcher. The air was dense, and clouds of incense floated in the mysterious light of the lamps; the yellow marble walls were illuminated. A solemn silence reigned. I beheld before me a prostrate body, a face pressed upon the sacred marble. I heard a sigh. . . ."

He paused, unable to go on, dominated by a profound emotion.

A bell sounded and they sauntered along silently, lulled by the atmosphere of the afternoon, by the ambient of peace and retirement in which the odor of incense and of the lilies, the aroma of prayer and of the orchard balsam seemed to be mingled. Soon there arose the song of youthful voices, a choir of children singing the evening hymn.

"Salve, Regina Mater. . . ."

All lifted their glances to the wall, which was bathed in a golden glow, fairly riddled with little holes into which the sparrows flew with a joyous twitter. Near the ground, in the moisture, the rocks were covered with moss that had the rich, dark color of clotted blood; further up, amid festoons of ivy, the weatherbeaten blocks of stone seemed sooted by the smoke of a conflagration and were here and there covered with a greenish growth as soft as plush and as rich as magnificent cloth; and yonder, amid this harmony of hues, shone the white and red lilies which, against the somber shades of the wall, symbolized those pure and ardent souls that bloom in oblivion, that bring the gladness of their chaste love to the solitary sadness of the retreat, smiling behind the gratings and sweetening the gloom of the cloister with their prayer.

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE LAMP OF THE SANCTUARY

THEY left. The peach-tree branches cast shadows from across the wall into the deserted plazuela. The belfry shone in the dying light of the day.

"Now you see that I've made you pay a visit to la Cartuja or to the Desert of La Candelaria, without mounting a mule or going by railroad."

"Yes. . . . That is to say. . . . What were you asking?" said Alejandro, with a distant look in his eyes.

Opposite them, amid the banks of the river, arose a line of roofs, and beyond, through the bluish mist, could be seen the curve of the ridge.

Roberto managed to convey to Doctor Miranda with a wink that Alejandro was lost in thought. The Doctor, closing his eyes, answered with a smile.

"What do you think of this spot, Alejandro?"

"This spot?" he replied, with an evident desire to contradict.—"This spot? Do you mean to imply that it's poetic? A suburb, a ruined belfry, a solitary orchard, and that's all. . . . Couldn't modern Bogotá have done away with all evidences of colonial days? . . . What? . . . Do you imagine that we must leave this place with contrite, penitent spirits?"

A crow's shadow sped along the ground. In a little window of the façade the breeze caused a withered palm branch, which was entwined in the bars of the grating, to quiver.

"I can easily see," said Roberto, "that this is one of your black hours."

Alejandro frowned, moved his lips as if about to reply, but said nothing.

"As a matter of fact, we all have, or have had, such hours," ventured the doctor, in a natural tone, fearing any suggestion of preachiness. "But, my dear Roberto, they are not black hours; on the contrary, they are white ones."

Slowly they reached the end of the plazuela. From below came the noise of the river among the stones, the sound of clothes being washed, the bleating of a goat as it climbed the slope, the songs of the washerwomen.

"And why white hours?" asked Alejandro, shrugging his shoulders. "To me they are black. . . . Or, if you won't have that color, at least they are gray."

"Those are the moments during which we all look within, and retreat to the depths of our consciences."

Alejandro said nothing in reply. Doctor Miranda continued.

"This internal struggle, these hours of melancholy, of gloom . . . all this is gray, Alejandro."

Then, pulling out his watch and looking at it in the palm of his hand, he exclaimed, "I've got something important to do!" And he walked off with long strides.

As he hastened down the slope the priest's cloak swelled and spread to the air; his tall, thin figure stood out against the wall, then disappeared behind a bend.

Both friends remained silent; Alejandro was more taciturn than ever. Roberto feared to provoke new contradictions. He knew that character well, and knew, too, that in such moments as these it was best to leave him with his thoughts. They descended. It was their habit to observe, to seek details, that they might discover in the least significant things an artistic line, an attitude, a patch of color, which afterward would appear in the shape of a vigorous page of writing or a striking bit of painting. From their height could be seen the interiors of houses, which seemed to fall upon the river, showing themselves with a certain air of familiarity, abandonment, confidence; series of stories, flashing panes, tortuous flights, balconies overlooking the abyss, adorned with shrubs, cages, bunches of flowers. . . . They continued their descent; they reached another level space, from which they could make out toward the west, the uneven line of roofs which displayed such a variety of red: the spires, the curve of a cupola, chimneys, clouds of smoke, and beyond, la Sabana, greenish, and like a dead lake.

They wished to converse, to exchange a few remarks, but they could not find the opening word. Everything seemed futile to them, unworthy of breaking the silence, of disturbing their deep and simple emotions. Roberto felt that both bore in their souls the ideal impressions of the afternoon,—the peace of the orchard, the priest's discourse, the cloister's sense of

withdrawal from the world, an aroma of sanctity, "the white vision," the lilies . . . and it seemed to him that if a word were uttered it would blot out everything, even as when a stone is cast into the waters of a lake the reflected images disappear: a marble statue, the façade of a temple, the pure blue, the peace of the infinite sky.

They noticed, in the center of the little square, a fountain with three silver spouts. Against the stone edge stood a maiden in the attitude of a caryatid, her tresses curled about her head, pitcher on her shoulder, held by an elegantly curved nude arm, while the other arm fell against the wet skirt which brought out her body in sculptural relief.

Not far away was a group of countryfolk, who, harnessing an ox, were wearily watching the departing day and preparing to return to their mountains.

The two friends, as if coming back from a long voyage, before they took the path that would bring them again to the city's tumult, turned with the sadness of farewell for a final glimpse of the heights, the hill with its cluster of houses ranged about like an amphitheater, and the belfry peering from above the trees.

They continued their homeward way amid rural scenes: children flying a kite, a hen with her brood, the murmuring of a little stream that wound about a house built amid the brakes. Further on the laborers were chatting at the doors of their workshops. A row of children were climbing the slope with pitchers of water.

After a protracted silence Alejandro suddenly spoke:

"Bellegarde maintains that the Magdalen we were speaking about is the work of the Spaniard Carreño; I believe that it's an original or a copy of Guido Reni. I'd like to look at the painting again and study it with greater leisure. . . . Do you care to come along?"

Roberto excused himself. Alejandro walked off toward the temple; a vague desire led him to some place where he could prolong, in solitude, the impressions of the afternoon.

He hastened along, fearing that there would not be enough light. A little while later he was in the church, before the painting of the Magdalen. It was an excellent hour for view-

ing it, for a stream of light from a lateral window bathed the picture.

The saint was represented as reclining upon a rock; behind was a landscape, an afternoon sky, a yellowish rim on the horizon. Her head was thrust back, her eyes turned heavenward, and she seemed to be conversing with the angels, who were floating downward, bearing a wreath. A red garment, with ample folds, fell from her girdle to the ground; from out of this cloak issued her bosom, as delicate as a lily.

A ray of sunlight crossed the central nave and fell upon the red cloak, as if to enhance the artist's effect, enlivening the general tonality and brightening the cloak against the rocks.

Alejandro removed his attention from the lines and the colors of the artist, thinking that he had penetrated into the inner thought, the theme of the composition, the poem of the cloak, of the hair and the hands; this mantle which amid the rural landscape was like a relic of the former pomp that the repentant courtesan had abandoned, those hands that bore the aromas to the Sepulcher, and that abundant head of hair whose silken tresses dried the feet of the Savior in the feast, anointed with the spikenard from the alabastrine vase. Her hand was stroking back her hair in an attitude that recalled, as if in her despite, the former sinner.

In the movement of both hands, in the cloak and the hair were symbolized the past and the present. . . . Time, the best of colorists, had blended the hues, gilded the whiteness and softened the outlines.

"There's no doubt about it," said Alejandro, stepping back. "Original or copy, that's by Guido. "I can't see how Bellegarde can deny it. That skill in the folds of the cloak, the hair treated so distinctively, those half tints with the bluish tones, betray without a doubt the hand of the master."

The twilight beam that fell obliquely through the transom kept rising, trembled, cast a rainbow glitter upon the prism of a chandelier and then was extinguished. Alejandro had to draw closer; the colors of the canvas had grown dimmer, and the outlines of the figure were blotted out.

From the transom falls a waning light; the solitary church is invaded by shadows.

The sparkle of the prisms, the glitter of the altar-pieces, the glad color of the flowers, have paled and died.

From the cupola descends a livid light that scarcely illumines the principal arch. The shadows continue to engulf the place, effacing lights and colors, until only a penumbra is left in the center of the cupola, and there at the end, in a corner bathed in gloom, two transoms that seem to peer into the darkness like two green eyes. The darkness, more and more dense, invades the arches of the confessionaries, the corners of the altars, the curves of the arcade. Only at the rear, in a lateral chapel, is there a yellowish light, a ray of dying light that quivers, glides along the wall, rises to the vaulted ceiling, turns the final sunbeam of the cupola greener than ever, crosses the roof diagonally, and is reflected upon the back of the pews, finally being extinguished in the depths of the choir.

Alejandro advanced several paces toward the rear of the church. To the right, in a nave, above a wooden candelabra, the candle that had been left there like a prayer by some unfortunate, was flickering before a crucifix. At times the burning wick would flicker up and send the shadows dancing across the pilaster; at other times the flame would seem to have gone out, whereupon it would light up anew with another lease of life. This agony of the candle illuminating the agony of the crucifix filled Alejandro with indefinable sadness. Why? He could not explain it. . . . Perhaps it was his old faith, his childhood piety, which was still struggling in the shadows, and which was about to be extinguished forever? . . . The candle went out. The nave was left in darkness. Only forward, in the lateral chapel, was there a delicate ray of light. He advanced. The lamp suspended from three silver chains, swayed and turned with scarcely perceptible rhythm, projecting upon the whitish wall the moving shadow of a chain,—a shadow which, parting from the altar, glided along, crossed a stone statue in its niche, floated over a pilaster, reached the edge of the arch and was lost in the gloom; then, after a space of time, it reached the edge of the arch again, returned to the stone statue, thence to the altar, gliding with a spectral motion.

A vague fear took hold of Alejandro,—the fear of the supernatural: the shadow that swung along the walls was about to come to life, to rise before him, to address mysterious words

to him, in menacing accents. From the obscure corners issued sounds that reverberated hauntingly from vault to vault. He recalled that fugitive ray that had alighted that morning upon the steel coat of mail, and that had returned that afternoon with mysterious persistence to illuminate the canvas of the repentant sinner. He wished to flee that place, free himself from these childish terrors; but soon there rose before him with extraordinary vividness the vision of the orchard with her sunken cheeks, with her blue eyes that were so strangely fascinating, and he was rooted to the spot, confused and ashamed. Such a recollection, so pure and so sacred, could not have remained in a defiled conscience. All the recollections of the morning passed before him anew, clear as day and sorrowful in his feverish imagination. He was overwhelmed by an inexplicable moodiness, a dense shadow enveloped him, and all hope of happiness was dead.

From afar came muffled voices, an ample rhythm filled with tenderness and mystery. They came from an invisible place, echoed from arch to arch, and, like the light, died languidly in the corners of the sanctuary.

From a distant chapel came the voice of the officiant. "Salve Regina Mater,"—and there resounded in the temple a catacomb-like murmur. Then came the perfume of incense, and with it, the remembrance of something long past,—the aroma of childhood, of spontaneous piety. The chorus of children's voices arose,—a simple, tender music,—something familiar that he had himself sung when a boy,—the melody of innocence, submission and purity.

The music came to him engulfed in waves of incense, in the delicate odor of flowers, and then, thanks to the mysterious power of the rhythm, as if all at once his years of storm and stress had been blotted out, he beheld a picture of former, better years: the chapel of the hacienda, the Virgin's celebrated nightly in the family circle. . . . A whole dead generation, of which only he was left floating on the surface like a stray spar from a shipwreck.

Before Alejandro's eyes the shadow of the lamp crossed anew, passing the arch and sinking slowly into the gloom. . . .

In the meantime the chant grew sweeter and more appealing, — the musical phrase that seemed so friendly to Alejandro was



repeated, and he let himself be drawn along by it, his soul being swung in rhythms of hope and tenderness. There came another picture before his eyes, and his heart pulsed with the free, steady flow of his earliest years: the altar, the candles, the little wreaths of orange-blossoms, the snow-white cloth, the large cup that quivered in the priest's hands, and then ecstasy, — the promises of the first communion, the offering of his life to an existence of self-denial and purity. . . .

On the wall, like a specter, the shadow of the chain silently crossed and was lost in the darkness.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE ELM AND THE IVY

UNDER the sun of that cheerful morning, amid the buzz of conversation and laughter, the whir of wheels and the snapping of whips, the carriages keep arriving at the Capilla del Sagrario; the horses are spirited, the harnesses shine, the coachmen are well-shaved. "The bridal pair!" murmur the inquisitive bystanders. And a crowd encircles the closed coupés that halt before the steps, while the gray horses proudly shake the white ribbons floating from their ears. Orange-blossoms hang from the whips of the coachmen and adorn their coats, and through the window may be seen, in a dark corner, the profile of a woman.

A door opened and there appeared a huge foot, the leg of a colossus, a bulging shirt-front upon which sparkled three large diamonds; the top of a silk hat hit against the roof of the carriage and out came Montellano, who walked toward the entrance of the church with his hat still askew. From the other carriage issued Doña Aura, dressed in black silk, and she followed Montellano with a courtly gait, upon the arm of Landáburu, who was the best man; the latter swept the crowd with his glance, but was aware only of his own presence.

As they entered the choir burst into a triumphal march which, filling the entire edifice, awoke in Doña Aura emotions that she could scarcely repress. While the bride crossed the temple, amid the flashing attire and the intoxicating perfumes of the

guests, she recalled her first marriage to Tubalcain Cardoso, in a humble village, while now she advanced erect, her eyes aglow with victory. She thought, too, of all the guile and cunning she had employed to win the millionaire.

Montellano and Doña Aura kneeled down upon the prayer-mats of red velvet, and the bulk of their persons seemed to fill the entire front of the chancel. . . . "At last . . . there is no doubt of it," Doña Aura was thinking. Montellano was there at her side; he shook the prayer-mat with his weight and she could hear his bullock-like breathing. . . . Within half an hour her union with the millionaire would be an eternal one, and that happy phrase which had come to her during one of her interviews would be realized.

What a great chapter this scene would make; what a splendid dénouement! She would have to change that title *Angel or Demon*, for something more suggestive, more poetic: *The Elm and the Ivy*. She tried hard to retain the emotions that were coursing through her, that she might represent them later in the heroine of the novel, Aurora; and she gazed closely at all about her that she might paint the scene in her book in all the color of reality, just as the brothers de Goncourt did. Although the ceremony had already begun, she paid little attention, given over as she was to her literary preoccupations: above the chancel arose four tall candles adorned with orange blossoms, lighting up the dark background of the altar; they were dimmed by the spirals of incense; an oblique sunbeam scattered luminous shafts amid the bluish haze, was mirrored in the tabernacle plaques, and landed upon the edge of the white page of the missal that was crossed by a red ribbon. She discovered a new detail, with which she promised herself to achieve a grandiose effect: in the two gloomy corners, at either side, appeared the head of the Baptist and that of Saint Paul in two silver platters, a bloody circle about their neck, their lips livid, bathed by a tragic pallor in which might be divined the final agonized tremor.

The music ceased; the choir ended its triumphal march. There appeared in the middle of the chancel Doctor Miranda, wearing the pluvial and holding a book in his hand. There he stood, erect upon the steps of the altar, wrapped in the cloak, which fell in perpendicular folds, illuminated by a stream of

light from above, in all the glory of his virginal vigor, his ascetic beauty, imposing love and respect upon the multitudes. Amid a hush he turned toward the bridal pair, and his full, vibrant voice resounded in the vaults of the temple.

"You are about to celebrate the holy sacrament of matrimony. . . ."

From the square outside came the noise of wheels. A carriage stopped. All eyes are turned: the flowers, the ribbons, the hats, stir; heads get close together and whisper. Inés advances with a graceful gait, smiling to all without resting her gaze upon any. She reaches the center of the church, seeks a place with her eyes, returns; Roberto arises, offers her his chair and remains at her side. The heads turn back to the altar; from behind can only be seen the row of backs, the dark patches of hair amid the bright colors of the clothes and the hats.

From his place Roberto notes that in the first row, near the chancel, there flutter from a hat two poppy buds; and he feels that Dolores will experience a nervous uneasiness on seeing him at Inés' side.

From the chorus, meanwhile, rises la Rondinelli's voice. She sings a slow melody with a simple rhythm which breaks into a sonorous, powerful, freely soaring phrase like an improvisation sustained by harmonies in its flight; at first it is like an ardent breath, then it becomes slower and finally languishes and dies in a sigh.

And Doña Aura, inspired by this melody, by the splendor that surrounds her, elaborates the plot of her novel: a large Oriental city on the banks of the Caspian Sea . . . besieged by the tyrant Ronderil with the aid of the Nabab Montelino. The leader of the beleaguered forces, Tubal-kin, dies . . . the besieged are already discussing surrender when the wife of the dead chief, the inspired poetess Aurora, a new Judith, resolves to visit the enemy camp. Before the great Nabab she is seized with trembling, and falls in love with the new Holofernes and, instead of slashing his throat, marries him. This novel will be called . . . she has already found the title . . . *The Elm and the Ivy*, or, *The New Judith of Negroponto*.

"Señora Aura del Campo, do you take Señor Ramón Montelano for your lawfully wedded husband? . . ."

Doña Aura was silent, engrossed in her exciting plot. There was a surprised, painful hush. Had Doña Aura changed her mind? But Montellano, in his thundering voice, exclaimed:

“Señora, did you hear?”

“Yes, I do! Yes, yes, I do!”

The ceremony came to an end.

To the strains of a joyous waltz the gathering began to leave, headed by Don Ramón and her who was now Doña Aura del Campo de Montellano. Behind came a long row of couples; Roberto with Inés, Alcón with Dolores.

When the guests arrived at the Montellano mansion they found a crowd of curious onlookers being held back by two policemen of stupid appearance, garbed in long coats and wearing Prussian helmets with white metal designs. They trod upon the carpets that had lately been spread out across the zaguan and the staircase; they made their way amid pines, palms, Abyssinian plane trees that filled the atmosphere with a moist, forest-like odor. The exotic fronds quivered from contact with the people, heightening the bright colors of the dresses that swished on the staircase and afterward glided off over the thick carpets.

“A pencil! Paper!” cried Doña Aura. My inspiration’s evaporating. . . .” Crossing the salons she reached the writing-room that had been prepared for her in her new home, and with feverish hand scribbled several sentences, a few words that would later form part of her great concluding chapter.

In the meantime Montellano had been eagerly seeking Doctor Alcón; he took him from Dolores’ arm and carried him off to his office. The sunlight was playing upon the safe, upon the letter-press, and was glittering cheerily upon the brandy bottles.

“Doctor Alcón, I was thinking of you at church . . . and I have gathered in the entire debt of 1848; now we need that decree reestablishing the amortization fund. Reestablish? No! . . . It must be doubled. . . . I can count on you, can’t I? Here, have a glass of whiskey? . . . You don’t like it? It cost ten shillings sixpence per flask. Well, here’s some Otard Dupay . . . this costs twenty-five francs. . . . Not this, either? Off then, and hunt up your partner. . . . Wait a mo-

ment. . . . Pay me to-morrow the amount of that last loan . . . that's what we agreed upon. . . . I count on you. . . ."

"Not to-morrow, because it's Corpus . . . the day after to-morrow, for sure. . . . I'll do my best. I have a very scrupulous chief."

Alcón, finding himself thus indirectly supported by Lola's father, encouraged in his hopes, crossed the gallery in high feather, elbowed his way through the crowd and sought her in the main salon, the former hall of portraits. Not finding her, he waited till she should come.

Dolores, who was in the dressing-room to which the women were coming to leave their hats and arrange their hair, awaited uneasily, and almost in fear, the moment when Inés should come in; she would then see her at close range,— would embrace the widely applauded beauty who was standing in the way of her happiness. And from behind a screen she spied her arrival with a palpitating heart. She saw her approach arm in arm with Roberto, who left her at the staircase landing; then she saw her cross the gallery. As they met in the doorway, Dolores for a moment held back, but Inés stepped forward, smiled, held out her hand; they kissed, left the room and crossed the salons; upon catching sight of them, all observed the contrast between these two types of beauty.

The beauty of the one was of a turbulent sort; the other's, of regal serenity. Here was Dolores, with her rounded curves, her thick, black hair, her ardent eyes, her rosy cheeks, her large hands. There was Inés, with her erect carriage, her graceful step, her silken tresses, her dreamy eyes, her jessamine-like pallor, and her long, slender hands, as perfectly modelled as a jewel.

Dolores was dressed in conservative fashion; she wore a gown of red velvet, and in her ears, two huge diamonds; Roberto's cousin was garbed in Alençon lace which enwrapped her like a wave of foam; she wore no jewels, and in her whole attire there was noticeable a certain personal touch that distinguished it from the dress in vogue.

Alcón drew near to offer his arm to Dolores; Inés crossed the gallery, between two rows of admirers who bowed as she went by. She bowed to right and to left, with a word here, a glance and a smile there.

Alcón had resolved firmly to conquer his timidity on that day and declare his love to Dolores, asking her to marry him. He walked through the rooms admiring the velvet furniture, the taste with which Montellano had replaced the faded old pieces of the house with brand new ones. But the declaration refused to come to his lips, and his ivory pate was bathed in purple flushes that betrayed his pleasure or his discomfort. Dolores listened to him uneasily and with her thoughts somewhere else. This marriage of her father had been very painful to her, and that morning she had wept at the vivid recollection of her mother; besides, she could not look without intense displeasure upon this new authority that was to be enthroned in Montellano's heart and in the house wherein she herself had dwelt as sovereign queen. These gloomy notions vanished at thought of Roberto, who vaguely represented to her requited love, rulership, authority.

All at once there was heard the unmelodious scraping of a violin, the runs of a clarinet, the grumbling of a bass fiddle; three raps from the conductor's baton; and then, stirring all nerves, warming all hearts, there burst forth the intoxicating strains of a waltz that submerged everything beneath a flood of warmth and enthusiasm; before the myopic eyes of Alcón and the restless eyes of Dolores whirled dancing couples, mingling the bright hues of lace and velvet with the monotonous color of the dress suits.

Soon Dolores caught sight of Roberto seated upon a divan beside Inés; she could not conceal her emotions and paused; her arm was shaken by a slight tremor; she grew pale, then exceedingly red. Alcón felt his partner's shock by a sort of rebound; lifting his eyes he saw Roberto, and it occurred to him that the psychological moment had arrived,— the longed-for moment in which he could broach the subject of marriage to Dolores. Taking her to one side, away from the sight of her rival, he murmured:

"Señorita Dolores, you with the big, dark eyes, now filled with passion, now roguish, now tenderness itself; endowed with the most winsome mouth that ever a brunette was blessed with, and a most piquant brunette at that, the kind that makes every eye turn for a second look when she passes by; with wavy, abundant hair that falls over your temples in rebellious locks,—

such a one as you, allow me to say, should not tolerate the antics of a rascal like Roberto who abuses the gifts he possesses . . . a sharp wit, a certain smatter of literature, facility and vehemence in expressing himself, such education as may be procured here . . . using them to deceive you."

"No, doctor; nothing of the sort."

"No? Why, I have this business of love at my finger tips . . . chimeras, trifles, bagatelles. After three terrible fits of temper, and after quarreling with the ingrate and not speaking with him for a few days that seem as many weeks, and trying to make him jealous by flirting with one of your many admirers, among whom I reckon myself, you will always pardon him in the end, after he swears the vow that he has made and broken a hundred times,—not to repeat his tricks. But the rascally ingrate, noting the falsity of the indifference with which you treat him,—for you are not skilled in deceit,—will permit himself to be deceived neither by your assumption of courteous indifference nor by your fits of fury, for this wily Roberto knows the whys and wherefores of all this affected indifference. . . ."

In Montellano's room, clouded with cigar smoke, there were tables for players; the place was filled with gossip, and plenty of ten-shilling-sixpence whiskey as well as twenty-five-franc brandy was gulped down.

In one corner Landáburu, Doctor Agüeros, Polanco and Mata were chatting. The merry din of the orchestra drowned out conversations and made it impossible to overhear confidential exchanges.

"Things are going badly," the doctor was saying, as he rolled a cigarette. "Ronderos is making himself solid; his prestige, despite the attacks made by *La Revaluación*, is spreading, and the peace of Warsaw is being made firm."

"This cursed canalization business has saved him," observed Landáburu. "Many of our friends are deserting. Socarraz himself, who seemed absolutely unshakable, has accepted a position from Bellegarde."

"And to tell the truth, they've done wonders in a few months," added Polanco. "When I first heard talk of the enterprise, I really didn't think it was so important a thing. They've started work all along the river; there are thousands of

laborers and they're scattering their money right and left."

"The enterprise has caught the public fancy. Roberto's articles have been highly effective,—there's no denying that," said Agüeros. "If we don't buckle down to something definite, old Ronderos will become President. On the canalized river he'll float before our very eyes into the Palace of San Carlos."

The orchestra stopped playing. To the office came the buzz of conversations from the other rooms. The men of the group thought it wiser to change the subject. Mata invited them to a drink; they approached the table, drained the glasses and lighted cigarettes. Then the air was filled anew with the strains of a polka.

"We need no better organization, my friend," said Landáburo, as the group drew together again. "What we need absolutely is the unified direction of the party,—blind obedience to a single chief. It's utterly necessary for you to proclaim my candidacy as the sole leader of the Revaluation party; I propose this to you with the soldierly frankness that characterizes me, and as the only possible means of saving our great party. Once I am recognized as leader, I would have to be handed the big sums that our fellow partisans have contributed throughout the republic for the wounded soldiers of Poland."

"That's a difficult matter," said Agüeros, who was in charge of the funds. "Unless you were proclaimed Director, as you wish."

"I will be, . . . I'll see to that, my dear Agüeros. . . . I've been hunting a long time, like Diogenes and his lantern, for the man who could exercise a unified direction, supreme command, and I have found him, my friends . . . I am that man."

"Hush!" said Mata. "Here's another glass. Let's rather go into the dining-room. . . . Come along!"

From the gallery the orchestra filled the house with loud sounds; the brass instruments flashed, and the bows of the violins rose and fell; the men of the group made their way through the crowd to the door of the salon. In the center, Doña Aura, with affected gestures in which she tried to conceal her forty years, was dividing the wedding-cake. Landáburo, who could not consent to play a secondary rôle in anything, had



no sooner caught sight of her than he elbowed his way amid the couples to the side of the poetess.

"Allow me to help you in this poetic ceremony."

And Landáburo officiating, the poetic ceremony continued; none of the guests knew what to do with these hard, black slices, covered with silvered balls that rolled from between their teeth.

Noticing Mata in the doorway, Doña Aura raised her voice.

"Let the ever-inspired poet recite something for us!"

"Yes! . . . Yes! . . ." cried several. "Let him speak!"

"I beg you, friend bard."

"The *Black Song*."

"The *Ballad of Despair!*"

"*Metamorphosis*."

"*Symphony in gray major*."

"*Egyptian Nostalgia*."

"Yes! Yes! That's it! *Egyptian Nostalgia*." They led the poet to a corner of the salon, the partners were seated, and Mata began to recite. The huge mirrors reflected the scene; the women concealing their boredom behind their fans, the young ladies whispering with their sweethearts, and others, with literary pretensions, stretching out their necks, paying eager attention. The men, standing around the poet in a compact circle, with little flags or white ribbons in their buttonholes, showed their ennui plainly on their faces. Meanwhile the poet, beside the balcony, with the light full upon him, the red of a bloodshot eye showing from under his lowered eyelid, waved his arms up and down and staggered to and fro like a man swaying in a boat. At last he came to the end:

May the song of my lyre, when comes the end,  
Break at the side of the eternal Sphinx, which gazes, gazes, gazes.  
And in the Nubian sand, which stretch like a white dream,  
I fain would be the eternal sweetheart of the unviolated Sphinx!

The salon resounded with applause that was deadened by gloves; the merry noise of footsteps animated conversations and happy laughter was heard anew, and the orchestra soon burst into another tune.

Landáburo and his friends continued their interrupted progress toward the dining-room. At last they reached the door

from where, behind a dense crowd of guests, they could make out the huge banquet table laden with food and wines. The waiters were bustling about, raising their arms and distributing plates that were seized from them by the guests.

Ladies and gentlemen, elbow to elbow, were carving and drinking with great difficulty; behind them stood a second row, awaiting the moment to fill the vacated chairs, and in the meantime intercepting bits of pastry, raisins, a cup of bouillon, which were tremblingly passed over the heads of the diners amid cries of terror, at times falling in the shape of dew upon the clothes of the guests. Behind was yet a third row, which entertained itself by seeing and hearing from afar the crunching of food, the stir of the waiters, the popping of champagne corks, the clatter of plates and glasses.

Landáburo and his friends made their way to the third row,—the row of aspirants. After a long wait they finally got an obliging fellow to bring them some plates, after which they received a few slices of cold meat; a half hour later came a knife, somewhat later a fork. Provided now with these, they remained standing, gazing at one another helplessly, unable to cut the food with the plates in their hands. Enviously they observed Sánchez Méndez at the other end, pressed tightly against the table, eating the various foods in leisurely fashion, sipping down his wine, smacking his lips, putting down the glass, raising the menu close to his eyes, that he might discover what it was he had been so conscientiously swallowing.

Into the dining-room came the unwearying measures of the waltz, and the dense, heated atmosphere was filled with shouts:

“ Jacinto, more of that turkey.”

“ Champagne here!”

“ Pedro! What’s become of my cold meat?”

“ Some more tarts!”

“ Let’s see; let’s see. A little red wine . . . but Château Lafitte. . . None of that Catalonian stuff for me.”

“ Sandwiches!”

“ A cup of bouillon.”

“ Ow! My frock coat!”

In the corridor there had formed two opposing currents,—those who were on their way to the dining-room, famished, and

those who were returning to the salons with sated appetites and in high spirits. At last Landáburo and his friends were able to advance to the second row, then to the first, close to the table, among a group of merchants.

"I prefer red wine," said a thin fellow with a watery look and a sickly voice. "My dyspepsia allows me no other kind. . . . Bordeaux costs three hundred francs per cask. . . ."

Another merchant with bulging cheeks and a paunch that prevented his close approach to the table, replied:

"Then you, with your dyspepsia, ought to be happy to see that the duties on red wine have come down."

"No, because the rest have gone up. Manchester articles have risen; you can't import them any more. . . . Business is ruined, dead."

"Not so bad at all that," answered the heavy-paunched capitalist. "If this canalization project goes through, this nation will be saved just like Argentina; river freight costs have gone down a great deal already, with the gradual acceleration of navigation. . . . Just reckon for yourselves what will happen when Bellegarde succeeds in making the river navigable for vessels of great draught. . . . Let's wait. . . . I myself at first thought that this enterprise, like so many others, was a farce. . . . No, sir, it means business and it'll prove a universal benefit. . . . Give us four years of peace and the river will be canalized."

General Ronderos, who through pressure of affairs had not been able to attend the ceremony or the early part of the banquet, now appeared in the dining-room in company of Montellano and a few friends. He was surrounded and received with all honors; glasses were raised to his health.

Karlonoff, who had made peace with Montellano (who believed that Ronderos' stock was rising and that his prestige was secure), cried out:

"Here's to our next president!"

From one end of the table to the other the toast was received with great applause and all glasses were raised.

"To our next president!"

Landáburo and Sánchez Méndez exchanged glances, replaced their glasses upon the table and made a face as if they had swallowed vinegar.

General Ronderos, after thanking the guests heartily, uttering a few compliments to the women and exchanging a few jests with his friends, withdrew.

Landáburo, turning to the group of merchants, which was momentarily growing larger, now raised his glass in a toast:

"Here's to the men of toil who live from and for industry. I, too, am a working man. My greatest ambition would have been to be an obscure farm-hand. . . . You must have seen my famous editorial called 'Make Way For Labor,' in favor of the ruling classes. . . . If I have been a journalist, a tribune and a fighter, I owe it more to certain persecution—" and with the tip of his mustache he pointed to the door by which Ronderos had left—"than to any innate gift for politics. . . . Like Molière's 'Doctor Despite Himself,' I have become a political celebrity against my will. . . ."

But little attention was paid to Landáburo. He sat down, and then, getting up again he continued, facing the merchants' group:

"I have been called a Jacobin, an anarchist, in the papers. . . . But am I really of that type? . . . The ambitious seeker must lie, pretend, vacillate, fawn upon the powerful and adulate everybody. . . . Can you not see that I am a man of some literary taste, who is acquainted moreover with commerce and agriculture?"

"I agree, I agree," answered the dyspeptic merchant quickly, as if fearing an enforced loan.

The hours scurried happily by. In the salons the curtains allowed some of the afternoon light to filter into the room; this light, however, was from time to time extinguished when the rainstorm, blown by the wind, came down from Monserrate in powerful gusts, slapping against the window-panes. Then the sun would reappear and, breaking in the prisms of the chandelier, would lavish rainbow hues upon the polished doors.

The crowd, in a kaleidoscopic whirl of colors, was strolling about the gallery, through the corridors, across the spacious salons, amid the swish of silk; all cheeks were glowing, all eyes sparkled. The dancing continued without let-up,—quadrilles, polkas, waltzes. . . . The orchestra's notes sounded inciting, turbulent; when for a moment it was silent, there would arise the loud din of footsteps, conversations, laughter, brim-

ming with joy. A warm wave of perfume seemed to intoxicate everybody.

In Montellano's office, which was clouded with cigar smoke, there was much drinking; flasks of brandy and whiskey were quickly drained; boxes of Havana cigars had been emptied and re-filled several times. Intimacy, confidence, a desire to talk, were getting the better of the merchants and the capitalists, in whose midst thundered Montellano's voice.

"You may have been surprised at the fact that this wedding is celebrated in my house, which is not the custom . . . according to what I'm told. . . . But Aura's house is so small . . . and we wanted to have a big time . . . a feast that costs three thousand dollars in American gold, my friends."

The capitalists and the rich merchants, generally self-guarded, were gradually opening their souls with great precaution, just as they opened their safes, and permitted a glimpse of their projects, their hopes, their ambitions. Amid the strains of the distant music, guffaws, slaps upon the shoulder or the stomach, amid the champagne, the brandy and the clinking of the glasses, there burst in the air, like fireworks, phrases that possessed for these men a sonority, a fascination and a poesy that were simply ineffable.

"A rise in coffee."

"Weak market."

"Have you heard that Martin Brothers have gone into bankruptcy?"

"Quotations from Costa Rica and Guatemala."

"Ground coffee for exportation."

"Twenty per cent. discount."

"One hundred-count baize."

"Canalization shares."

Doña Aura, assuming her rôle as lady of the house, did the honors most ostentatiously, scurried everywhere hunting up partners for the young ladies, saying a word here, dropping a literary phrase there, seeking gallants to take elderly matrons to the dining-room. Her face lit up every time she came across Bellegarde, and she would raise her voice so as to be heard by all:

"My dear Count, you've taken nothing."

"My dear Count, what are you telling there?"

"My dear Count, won't you give me your arm?"

"Would you believe it, Count? I'm stifing in this country. . . . I'm so anxious to set foot upon the soil of your native land,—the country that gave the world George Sand, Anais de Segalais, Madame de Staël, Madame Craven. . . . Those virile women lived by their pen. . . . That's possible over yonder. . . . Over there a woman may be a man of letters."

Inés, in a corner, surrounded by her admirers, was maintaining a rapid-fire conversation with them. Roberto dominated the group,—held it under the spell of his versatile tongue, now concise, now sparkling, and at times mordant, bitter. Bellegarde, falling more and more in love every moment, had imposed the most rigorous reserve upon himself; he did not care to break the friendship of the two families,—to put himself in the way of Roberto's happiness, to add to the burden of Doña Ana's worries. But, despite his great will-power, he would weaken now and then, and, as in the theater, on the night that they gave Werther, he would drop into Inés's ear a phrase, an allusion that revealed his hidden passion. Nevertheless, he did not think that he was obliged to deprive himself of the pleasure of conversing with Inés, of admiring her thoughtful, caressing eyes, her proud features, which were ennobled by a glow of kindness and illuminated by a look of intelligence.

Landáburu drew near.

"Roberto, let's have a recitation. . . . May I lead you to the piano, Señorita Inés?"

They excused themselves.

"Señor Bellegarde, they tell me that you're a fine musician, — a great pianist. . . . I know a bit of music myself; I understand harmony and counterpoint, although I can't play any instrument at all. I can hardly blow a few notes on the bugle,—the most important calls. . . . Won't you favor us, Señor Count? . . . I come as ambassador of the lady of the house, Doña Aura del Campo de Montellano."

"As ambassador?" said Roberto. "In 1815 Canova came to Paris to claim the paintings that Napoleon had taken off with him from the Vatican. 'I come as ambassador from the Holy

See.'—'As a packer, you mean,' was Talleyrand's reply."<sup>1</sup>  
 Landáburo withdrew in disgust, to fulfil another mission.

Alcón, who had left Dolores free to dance with some of the young men, was filled with new courage and made up his mind that he would see the matter through this time. He took her arm again and they resumed their endless strolling. She did her best to hide her displeasure, her disappointment, the downfall of her hopes, and pretended animation, joy, an explosion of contentment. Alcón, seeing her in this mood, believed himself already the victor; doubtless Dolores was so happy because she was with him. With his classic phrases and his exposure of Roberto he had succeeded in softening the flint of that heart, — in bending her will toward him.

But when they passed the room in which Roberto was, he could detect Dolores' bitterness from the tone of her voice, the tightening of her fingers about a ribbon, the feverish glint of her eyes.

What irritated her most was to see Alcón's face so near, flushed with the pleasant anticipation of triumph,—that false smile, that curved nose, those eyes that were like the eyes of a bird of prey about to take her into its talons and crush her.

"Señorita," said Landáburo, "as the ambassador of your new mother, I come to beg you to enchant us with your voice."

She hesitated, but so anxious was she to get rid of Alcón, to free herself from his clutches, that she took the ambassador's arm.

"*Carmen*. . . . I am charged with begging you to sing that aria from *Carmen*."

For a moment she was on the verge of refusing; she felt a strange oppression, a repugnance for that song so full of passion, of such sparkling joy, which she had been practicing for so many mornings, while from the patio came the murmur of the fountain and from the nearby office the voice of Roberto. . . . Sing? . . . Yes, she would sing, she would master herself, she would flaunt a bold happiness before all, the joy of a carefree heart. As she drew near to the piano she feared lest

<sup>1</sup> The pun, in the original, is upon the Spanish words "embajador" (ambassador), and "empacador" (packer).

her strength abandon her,—lest she collapse. Her temples pounded so, and there was a buzzing in her ears; her blood was so hot that it burned her cheeks. . . . She forgot the words and the music. But another access of determination brought back her control, and with a supreme effort she gave the signal to the orchestra. Sustained by the opening chords, she began in an uncertain voice:

Quand je vous aimerai, ma foi je ne sais pas.  
Peut-etre jamais, peut-etre demain.  
Mais pas aujourd'hui, c'est certain.

Roberto was astonished to note that this playful melody in which the clicking of the castanets could be divined, and which Dolores used to repeat every morning without any life or significance, was now being filled with a personal feeling, with life, with fiery spirit, and he was overcome by a deep emotion,—the contagion of powerful feelings, of irrepressible impulses.

Dolores sang on:

L'amour est un oiseau rebelle  
Que nul ne peut apprivoiser;  
S'il lui convient de refuser  
Rien n'y fait menace ou prière.

L'un parle bien, l'autre se tait,  
Est c'est l'autre que je prefere,  
Il n'a rien dit, mais il me plaît.

The hearers were electrified; the song penetrated their hearts as if by some mysterious wave, and stirred them deeply.

Roberto, motionless, pale, listened to her in a sort of stupor. Dolores' voice, which still needed much training, with its rough accent and its harsh timbre managed despite all to impart to the melody an element of ineffable sincerity. This wanton music was dominated by notes of dejection, inflexions of bitterness,—the tear stifled behind the loud laugh, the sinister threat of jealousy. It was a love that explodes, that throbs, that infects,—fascinating, dominating passion.

L'amour est enfant de Bohême  
Il n'a jamais connu de loi;  
Si tu ne m'aimes pas, je t'aime,  
Si je t'aime, prends garde à toi.



Despite the intense admiration aroused by the song, the crowd of hearers remained silent; it was overpowered, paralyzed by surprise, stupefaction, the shudder of enthusiasm.

Bellegarde watched Roberto closely, saw how his eyes grew clear and flamed up with extraordinary light, and in the intuition of such supreme moments he understood that his friend's heart was bounding with passion for Dolores, that Roberto was conquered. Now he would be free; he would hesitate no longer, would feel the need of delicacy no more; the obstacle to his happiness had vanished. Inés cast a furtive glance at her cousin; across her jessamine forehead passed a shadow, but almost at once she regained her attitude of gentle pride.

Alcón, with a red pate and flashing eyes, turned to Dolores; without a doubt it was he who had inspired this sincere passion; this impassioned song, this penetrating voice, this eloquent music,—all spelled his triumph. Dolores was his, and with her came the invincible prestige of millions.

Her black, ardent eyes fell upon Roberto, who was also at her side; Lola's face lit up with an expression of happiness too deep for words; unhesitatingly she leaned upon the young man's arm and amid the thunderous applause of the spectators, who had at last awakened from their stupor, they crossed the salons and went off together. Dolores felt that the long-awaited-for moment had come,—that her fate was to be decided.

“Dolores! . . .”

Radiant with happiness she turned her head; the afternoon sun fell full upon her face.

The ardent, passionate word was there; it bourgeoned in Roberto's bosom like a flame, rose in his throat, trembled upon his lips; but he noticed her large diamonds, the loud colors of her dress, her noisy manner, her air of triumph, not untainted by a certain vulgarity . . . the cinnamon luster of her jet black hair, those large, stubby hands,—the rapacious hands of Montelano. . . . And the sentence died on his lips; he slipped his arm out of hers and bowed coldly; she entered her room.

L'amour est enfant de Bohême,  
Il n'a jamais connu de loi.

Love is a child of Bohemia  
That has known neither God nor law.

The orchestra continued to play; it repeated the snappy, wanton rhythm in which could be divined the click of the castanets.

## CHAPTER XVI

## SLEEPLESSNESS

DOLORES, on leaving the arms of Roberto, crossed the dressing-room, passed through two drawing-rooms, came to her own room, and locked the door, meaning to be by herself in her indignation, her sadness. She felt exhausted, and with closed eyes, without gazing, without thinking, she let her arms drop listlessly down her sides. All her vital forces, all her blood coursed stormily in her breast, in her heart.

Through the walls and the curtains there came to her the notes of the flutes, the sobbing of the violins, the solemn tones of the bass viols, and these were mingled with the flappings of the breeze, the whistling of the wind through crevices. How clear and distinct had this music been in the bracing atmosphere of the morning, during those hours of hope, announcing a day of rejoicing! But now it was already a tiresome tune, one which the musicians performed upon worn-out strings; one which dragged itself along with accents of weariness, with languor, sounding in these rooms where the last guests were still whirling amid dead flowers and withered wreaths. At last all these noises which hurt her head ceased, noises which hammered upon her nerves precisely as the strings of the piano had been hammered upon for hours. In the drawing-rooms the murmur of voices and the din of footsteps ceased at last. In the street could be heard the slamming of house-doors, the rattle of coaches and the clatter of horses' hoofs that was lost finally in the distance. Thereupon might still be dimly distinguished footsteps of some solitary passers-by, the shouts of a servant or two, the closing of one gate after another, and then nothing but a general silence, pierced now and again by one of those nocturnal noises that seem a part of the night itself, and the melancholy of which entered her very soul. And in the midst of this lull, immersed in the freshness of the night air, there

arose before the eyes of Dolores, as though to console her in her solitude, the image of her mother.

And with this thought the fictitious value of her pride, the assumed indifference that had sustained her, disappeared like a flash. There came the crisis; she burst into tears, and she spread out her arms into the void in search of her mother. With how much confidence, her head hidden in her mother's lap, would her grief have been assuaged! How much she lacked those passionate kisses, those words of endearment, those caresses. Never before had she understood so keenly as at this very instant her orphaned condition; never before had she felt herself so abandoned. What horror, what repugnance did she feel just then for Doña Aura, who only that morning had usurped the place of her own mother. . . . And in her fevered brain she saw two abhorred faces: Doña Aura and Inés. The same Inés who had crossed her path, who snatched at her happiness. Ah! But at least she would humiliate her, would pay her score off with interest, insult for insult, shame for shame.

Excitedly she moved about the room, wringing her hands, while obscure instincts awoke in her, until then hidden away in remote corners of her soul, instincts which now in these throes of pain rose to the surface, causing her to throb with confused sentiments of rage, wrath, sadness.

And to rid herself of these odious images she raised her hands to her eyes and let the scenes of that day pass before them: the departure for the church, the altar, the huge wax tapers, the rays of the sun falling athwart the clouds of incense, the rolling of a coach on the square outside, a presentiment which made her shudder, the rustling of silk, . . . Inés, and, at her side, Roberto. . . . Afterwards, the house, the drawing-rooms, the whirl of the waltz, . . . the dressing-room, . . . again Inés, arriving in the midst of a murmur of homage. The kiss . . . those cool lips, soft as rose petals which one scarcely feels on the cheek. . . . Alcón, his bald head, his false smile, his rapacious look. . . . And then, with even greater intensity, causing her a feeling of oppression, a stab of exquisite pain in the heart, the song from *Carmen*. Roberto, transfigured, his eyes shining with intense passion, with trembling lips about to stammer: "Dolores!" . . . Again, his coldness, the change, the glance which dies out, the disillusion reflected in the pupils of his eyes. . . .

"Heavens, why? What have I about me to make him alter like that?"

A flash of lightning flooded the apartment, and forming an echo to her grief, a thunderclap reverberated through the chain of mountains.

In that hour of disillusionment, of her first great sorrow, when the tears issued out of her burning eyelids, without attempting to pierce the future she only thought of the past. She remembered her childhood and, mingled with that, as always, was the memory of her mother. . . . She saw the estate of *La Danta*, her existence amidst the scenes of rude Nature, the sugar-mill. She thought of her constant longing to see the capital, and of her departure, on a day of hope, of the journey. . . . She recalled the ascent of the steep rocks of *El Consuelo*, . . . the blue butterfly. . . . How the unknown had approached her, and the conversation that morning which enwrapped them in the warm vapors in the ravine in front of that immensity filled with light, like a new horizon displaying an infinitude of happiness. . . . Of the rosebush, too, she thought musingly, and of the rain of white petals that covered them like a shower of orange blossoms,—her bridal veil.

A tense darkness invaded the bedchamber of Dolores, who rose and went to place her forehead against the window panes, through which she looked down into the empty street and up to the sky where no star gleamed. Thick drops began to fall, beating against the glass and trickling down like tears. Anew a flash of lightning, blinding her, illuminated the whole row of house fronts with a tremendous reverberation, and once more everything was buried in inky blackness. Another flash, and with eyes dilated with fright she saw again sharply outlined against a horizon all afire the shapes of the houses, the tower of a church, while the thunder made the panes tremble.

The storm retreated more and more in the distance; far away the rumblings of thunder were now wandering through the ridge of the mountains, until at last the night became once again still.

She then felt fatigue overwhelming her, an acute pain in the eyes and forehead, as though her head would burst. She had a feeling of oppression, and a vehement desire to destroy, to disappear, to die even seized her, and again the tears fell down her cheeks, crept around the curve of her chin.

Fatigue and sorrow finally exhausted her, and she began to slumber. But the coolness of early morning awoke her. She wrapped herself in the darkness, full of fear, without remembering where she was, shivering with the cold and with the dim consciousness of nursing a confused and vague grief. From time to time falling objects outside horrified her, and she drew near the window to peep out. It had cleared, and the silence of the grave reigned in the city, interrupted only by the monotonous gurgling of the gutters. In the varying shadows stood out the row of house fronts, lit up at intervals by the pale rays of the electric lamps. In the background, against an atmosphere of perfect stillness in which the lethargy of many thousands might be felt, there rose heavily the backs of the Guadalupe and Monserrate; but farther away, through the opening between the two mountains, the first broad bands of dawn could be traced in the sky. A cat walked furtively upon a roof, arrived in front, made sure of its ground, and stood with its outlines clearly and sharply defined on the sky-line. Dolores once more sought the shelter of her bed and fell asleep anew.

The solemn voice of the large bell in the cathedral roused her. She opened her eyes amidst waves of brilliant light that streamed in through the curtains and the blue bed hangings. She tried to smile as usual in the face of such a glad splendor. But again she was assailed by a vague remembrance, and she felt the keen pangs of overhanging pain. The smile died on her lips.

"Ah, if only . . ." she muttered.

But she collected herself. Her thought, as if illuminated by that fresh and serene light, as if rested by repose, brought before her in perfect order, one by one, the impressions of the preceding evening.

The far clamor of the pealing bells continued, the shrill sounds of vows uttered, the noises of merriment. She glimpsed on the house in front, bathed already in sunlight, the festoons which danced in the gusts of the breeze.

"Corpus Christi Day," she mumbled, "the great holiday!"

The light, the booming from the old tower close by, the bustle coming up from the street, spoke to her of rejoicing, of new life, and all this infused her with new courage, woke in her hereditary energy, the battling instinct, the desire to conquer and to triumph.

## CHAPTER XVII

## CORPUS CHRISTI DAY

A DELIGHTFUL wind sweeping down from the mountains and taking part in the city's holiday, bore on its wings the deafening clamor of a hundred church bells, the crackling of the sky-rockets, the uproar of the big crowd all dressed in gala attire, scattered the odors of laurel and fresh mosses and formed a symphony of colors, shook smartly the streamers and banderoles, fluttered the ribbons of the altars, agitated the festoons, dandled the thousands of small baskets of flowers, and rustled the rich damask stuffs everywhere displayed.

Dolores, who wanted to move about and shake off her troubles, to see the city in its gala mood, went out in company with Doña Aura, and the two soon lost themselves in the multitude which, overflowing with joy, was streaming to and fro in the streets adorned for the feast day of Corpus Christi. The throng defiled along and around the corners, avoiding the middle of the road where for the whole length and breadth of each thoroughfare were hung aloft garlands of moss, similar in their vivid green to a meadow in England, and bordered with fern palms. The green ground was beautified with stars and arabesques of purple hue. Up and down the road and joined by chains of festoons, had been erected mastheads crowned by banderoles and garlands that likewise swung, rippled and tossed in the air.

Before the altars in the streets, already covered with veils, but behind which the last hammer blows still sounded, were grouped people in their Sunday clothes. On the scaffolds some workman lifted the veil to have a candelabra, a crown handed him. Then the crowd would break out in an ah! of astonishment in catching a half glimpse of the artificial temple adorned with plush, velvet, candelabras, bunches of daisies.

Above the crest of heads, arms are raised holding crowns, pillars, or linen strips belonging to altars not yet completed, and baskets filled with oranges, candy, cakes, sugar-coated apples. Rich farmers from the country in coats of a past fashion, pushed on by the human wave, are raising their tanned faces and are admiring everything, while they never fail to decipher with care

the inscriptions on the stores and walls, which here and there announce behind curtains: "Extractions without pain," "Notary public," "Swiss Watchmaker," "Notice!", "Vidaurre & Villafañe, Commission merchants," and similar things. They listen with attention to the street vendors at the corners, and watch carefully the distribution of shrubs taken from near-by hills that are to be used in embellishing the festival by contributing the latest splendor of their buds and branches.

And now there is a resumption of chimes and peals, but more solemn and sonorous, and the immense crowd pours through the three great portals into the cathedral. Within a few moments only the naves are filled, and clusters of men and women are formed all around the pilasters, while even the lateral chapels are invaded. So are the nooks in the whole spacious edifice, and when checked the overflow is squeezed into the entrance hall and thence floats out once more into the streets where new throngs are formed at the corners.

In the sacristy were stumbling about the priests, crossing themselves with great zeal, wearing embroidered capes, the acolytes clad in red, the vergers in robes of white satin. Several servants held armfuls of wax tapers; a canon tied hurriedly his golden stole, and an immense group of gentlemen in full dress were taking these candles, while others clutched the staff of the standards. In the semi-obscurity of the sacristy the flames of the tapers began to shine. The archbishop, surrounded by his cortège, was waiting in the presbytery beneath his throne, and was girt with surplice, pallium, and miter.

And now the church standards began to wave heavily above all these heads. Groups were forming of those who were to bear these or to hold the cords. Montellano started to move away with one of the standards. At his right González Mogolón was to march, and the latter had already loosened the tassel and was rushing about the whole sacristy and getting red in the face shouting orders. Behind him were Alejandro and Roberto; the latter was pale on that day, with a peculiar pallor, so that his black beard and the dark circles under his eyes were quite prominent.

They had been waiting in vain for General Ronderos and Doctor Alcón, and their absence had been noticed.

Montellano was disturbed, shook his head, and asked in a low voice:

"Roberto, how is it that the Minister has not come?"

"He's occupied and preoccupied," was the answer.

"Do you know anything about it, my dear Roberto?" Montellano, his lips dry with anxiety, wanted to know, adding: "And Doctor Alcón? Was he not to come? Can he be ill?"

"Something more than that," said Roberto, glad to worry Montellano. "He has resigned or they will make him resign."

Montellano, who saw his influence at the ministry threatened, the probability of immediate payment of his loan looming, the resolution on the bonds of '48 involved, felt a shock of alarm. He opened his eyes wide, shuddered, staggered like a bull receiving the thrust of the sword between the shoulder blades, snorted then and brandishing his standard began to trample upon the bystanders. He knocked down a number of acolytes on the stairs of the sacristy, entangled himself first in a dalmatic, and next in the chains of the censer, and amid a muttered chorus of maledictions he descended to the nave of the cathedral. There he penetrated the dense crowd and pierced his path through it like the ram of a battleship, the human wave all about him moving stormily during this charge. Then he issued into the square, took breath, found out where he was precisely, and then launched forward towards Alcón's house to get full information regarding the sinister news. He tried to make his escape, panting, through the Calle Real, in the opposite direction from the current, through the very center of the road, beneath the awning of greenery, treading upon the soft carpet of moss that extended intact, destroying labor, arabesques, leaving behind him imprints of his footsteps as huge as the tracks of an elephant, dragging along on the inside of his dress-coat bits of wire and lichen from the arches, shavings, scraps of paper, while all around him people cried out in protest, in wrath, in dudgeon, mingled with laughter, from sidewalk to sidewalk, from windows to balconies:

"Make room!"

"He comes from the bull-pen!"

"That arch over there has tumbled down! Be careful there!"



“ Fire in the cathedral! ”

“ The Pope is dead! ”

In this way he proceeded two blocks, then turned to the left, towards the house of the assistant secretary.

The rockets hurtled about in the air, and the people choking up the outer hall of the cathedral began to leave it, forming a slowly moving, living cascade. There were descending the road two currents of color, separated by two threads of light. The cross of the episcopal chapter began to appear in the distance, and behind it, in interminable file, came the colleges in their uniforms, then gentlemen attired formally for the occasion, the pupils of the seminaries who, seen from afar, with their peculiar garments traced two large white fringes upon the moss. After them, the plumes on their hats fluttering in the breeze, followed the generals who were in the train of the chief of state. In the very center there was to be seen a gorgeous mass of dalmatics, stoles, surplices, priests' hats, gleaming cloth of gold, all these brilliant hues and rich tissues issuing from the twilight of the cathedral naves into the intense light of full day, where they glittered and shone wondrously. The snowy rockets fairly dazzled in the sun. The buckles on the priestly hats of one group of processionists flared out, and their steps died away upon the rug of moss. Again they turn in the long line, huge censers are swung ceaselessly, and at intervals light cloudlets of fragrant incense are wafted upwards. Below a shower of flowers, amidst perfumed smoke and the murmurings of psalms, advances slowly and solemnly the canopy. Under its shade is the prelate who offers in his trembling hands, between a circle of diamonds, the white host to the adoration of the populace.

In a perfect satiety of colors which by the noon sun was turned into brilliant rays like those of diamonds, in the midst of harsh grinding sounds made by the wheels, the clashing of martial music, a clamorous enthusiasm, appeared the heavy carts bearing living illustrations from Bible passages. There came spans of oxen with gilt horns, their drivers in flaming turbans. On high, amidst groups of shaking bushes and vivid foliage, boys were to be seen with rosy faces, masked to show fierce beards of ancient warriors. Scores of pretty girls adorned with the splendor of the Orient, their bare arms and necks hung with precious jewels whose sparkle was reflected by the delicate skin.

These carts passed on, tottering under their burden, sheaves of wheat, lions' and bears' hides decking the chief actors; linens and cloths in stripes of blue, red and yellow everywhere, lavish gold foil, fringes of brocade. All this gleamed in the bright sunshine. And there they were: Ruth with her ears of corn; David with his harp under a cloak of ermine, the high priest with his miter of silver and a display of emeralds and rubies, the messengers sent into the Promised Land bending under their burden of giant bunches of grape. Then there were Judith, the scimitar, the sumptuous couch of Holofernes; Mordecai, with his white horse; Esther, Herodias, Rebecca,— in short, the whole Orient, its whole poetry, the grand majesty of the Bible.

The balconies were crowded with people, faces reddened by the heat, a wealth of dark hair, silvery velvet, parasols which were waved industriously.

During the procession González, who had supervised all to the slightest detail, while the music sent its waves of sound to the extreme end of the line of march, was moving about gesticulating, making signs with his head, with his arms, his bald head burned by the sun. He was showing the various features of it all to sight-seers, using his burning candle to demonstrate with, drops of wax falling unawares upon smooth dress-coats.

"You see," he was saying, "though a simple recruit of the good cause, I always feel that I have to assist in everything, and so I managed to place this cross at the mouth of this street. . . . Only look here at this bed of daisies! And here, notice how I've gathered the Book of the Seven Seals. . . . The letters there stand for the capital sins, and these I have put where they are myself. . . . You see here B. C. P. C. E. O. N. . . . Have you never read the Book of Revelations?"

The balconies at Montellano's, too, were jammed with people: wraps, parasols, all sorts of faces met the eye; groups placed in a motley manner, servants who shouted and stood on tiptoe to see better, babies that were crying or babbling, and all this hurly-burly, this multitude that was suffocating and moving about in a humming like that of a bee-hive, seemed to belong to the millionaire, at least according to an inscription visible on the center balcony and which, in letters of bronzed iron that clung to the iron bars proclaimed: "I belong to Ramón Montellano."

Not far from this, on an ancient balcony, where a coverlet of

damask was belying in the keen air, were Doña Ana and Doña Teresa, and seated right in front of them, Inés and Bellegarde. The evening preceding, on observing that Roberto had decided in favor of Dolores, the Count had believed himself free. And now he was breaking the severe silence which he had imposed on himself. Thus he was able to show Inés, without any further reserve, the depths of his heart. Not a word of love came over his lips, but he conversed with her familiarly, in a delicious intimacy, asking her for details respecting national customs, national festivals, and listening with close attention to Inés' answers. She evidently showed herself complaisant, and indeed seemed to have awakened from her dreams. But without parting a jot from her amiable pride, with that habit of silence which Roberto had noticed and remarked upon, she suddenly began to stammer. In taking in the view from the front balconies, her eyes met constantly those of Dolores, and the latter looked fixedly at her, passionately, ardently. And Dolores, seeing the couple, was visited by ideas which filled her with hope and relief. "If these two only would marry," she thought.

At the office of Vidaurre & Villafañe, doors ajar, were conversing Doctor Agüeros, Landáburo, Polanco, and Gacharnah.

"The upright people are joining us," said Polanco. "The peace of Warsaw will last."

"I don't believe it," answered Gacharnah mysteriously. "I do know that Alcón is writing in *La Integridad* against Ronderos."

"It is irritating, this spectacle of a worthy doctrine," said Landáburo, "like that of the distinguished philosopher of Palestine, rendered ridiculous by such a masquerade. It is humiliating that the Colombian Guard, contrary to the military spirit, must go to form a chorus to these Catholic farces. Doctor Agüeros, it will be necessary to suspend such orgies of ultramontane fanaticism when the day of Revaluation dawns, and may I be on the throne by that time."

"Take care, my dear General," replied the physician, "for the clergy are an enemy to be feared. In the evolution of society it takes long till the religious microbe will disappear from the brain of the masses, a microbe which produces a lymph, a ferment that is full of . . ."

"He is dying, he is dying," shouted voices outside. "Quick, a doctor," and Doctor Agüeros plunged into the street below.

Roberto, as he passed with his standard facing the balconies of Montellano's house stopped suddenly, became pale as death, and the expression of his painfully drawn mouth revealed an intense agony. He stretched out his hands, and before Alejandro was able to support him, he fell senseless.

Dolores had allowed a cry to escape her, and heads were raised in her direction. She wanted to go towards the unconscious man. Inés approached Doña Ana and betrayed her anxiety only by the trembling of the hand which she had reached out to the cold hand of the old lady, who, on her own part, pierced by grief, without taking a step, without one gesture, allowed her tears to run, turned her gaze towards the host, and with blanched lips whispered:

"Oh, Lord, . . . Thou, Thou who once didst recall to life the son of the widow . . . !"

Roberto opened his eyes and with a supreme effort gained his feet once more. Staggering, and clutching Alejandro's arm, he seized the cord of the standard anew, and then said with a broken voice:

"It is nothing. Let us go on!"

Doctor Agüeros shook his head doubtfully, pursed his lips, and vouchsafed her one of his smiles of self-sufficiency and mystery. Then he said a few words in Frenchified Latin to Alejandro.

But Roberto answered: "No, let us continue. We are taking part in a public function. Let us go on!"

And he himself began to arrange the filing-off, to reorganize the route of the carts. Moving off in full view of Doña Ana, and perceiving her face to show a deathly pallor, he tried to say to her with his gaze and his smile:

"I already am feeling well, dearest mother!"

In front of the Church of St. Francis, against its tower, conspicuous on the huge blocks of stone, was raised a high throne clothed in fine scarlet, with ermine to its back. Beneath its baldaquin the light sparkled prismatically in its chandeliers, in the glass pendants of its candelabra. The wind inflated the pavilion, shook the cloth and the cords that held it, and fretted about the veiling and the loose objects.

The canopy arrived at this spot, the procession halted, and the fanfares ceased. Doctor Miranda drew near the prelate, mounted next the velvet-covered steps, and upon a pillar, in the rear of the tabernacle, he deposited the reliquary. All knees bent, every head bowed in reverence, and the smoke rose from the censers. In the silence of a whole city prostrated on the ground, the voice of the prelate rose, and next a hymn was intoned with infinite sweetness by a chorus of childish voices. The hymn ascended and was finally lost in the blue of the vault resplendent with light and sunshine.

Above the sea of curved backs plainly to be marked were the canopy, the neck of a bass viol, the written scores of the musicians, and the soft plumes on the Generals' hats.

The immense concourse of people now retraced their steps through the streets on their way back to the Plaza of Bolívar. The prelate ascended the steps of the cathedral's forecourt, and with his back turned to the church, he gazed towards the west. The committee of canons, of priests, of gentlemen, grouped themselves around him. The symbolical carts arrived, and the military drew up in line. The different strains of music blended. The enormous throng grew black on the plaza. The sun was sinking. With its last splendors it caressed the bronze statue of the Liberator, flashed across the groves of bayonets, illuminated the gaily colored group of the picturesque carts massed in the center of it, and over an ocean of heads it set afire an aureole of glory, the golden haze of early evening.

The prelate takes one step, and offers the reliquary heavenwards. A tremendous rattle of drums runs along the whole line. The French horns pierce the air with their strident note which fills the whole circumference. The military presents arms. The multitude prostrates itself. A silence of expectation and astonishment reigns, only interrupted by the flapping of some streamers aloft, far up on top of the tower. The sun now slowly disappears below the horizon, launches a last ray which kisses the foot of the reliquary. The host, amidst all this splendor, is being lifted up, and traces slowly a cross in the air.

## CHAPTER XVIII

## SACRIFICE

BELLEGARDE lived in a villa on the road to Chapinero. One morning he went very early to Bogotá and took the street car to return immediately to his dwelling, where he meant to write an important letter in the silence of the country. The groves and flower beds, a light mist, the rolling of coaches and carts, the invigorating cool air, all recalled to him his own country, and the spring there. He was reminded of some of those mornings in early April when the trees, bare but the night before, are suddenly covered with young shoots, with plump burgeons, and when a new sap seems to run through the blood, when everything seems reborn: leaves and hopes.

Bellegarde had, after long vacillation, taken a resolution that filled him with hope and gaiety, namely, to ask Doña Teresa for the hand of Inés. And he who was accustomed to conquer gigantic obstacles, who had in Europe raised millions in order to launch them upon America afterwards, who had left behind him in the United States and Argentina unprecedented monuments to his audacity, was now timorous and undecided, almost overcome by an insuperable timidity. He did not dare to present himself before Doña Teresa to voice his request to her, word for word, and much less did he find the courage to put to Inés direct a question the answer to which meant either his happiness or the reverse. And thus wrestling on the one hand with his strong passion and on the other with his fear of a refusal, he had concluded finally to write to Doña Teresa. He pondered over it, searching out the best terms for this difficult letter, and thus meanwhile he meditated deeply as he rode on the car, glancing to one side and the other of the landscape through which he was being carried. The first rays of the sun threw the shadows of the trees upon the house fronts. He noticed a park, beds of blooming flowers, rows of budding trees, small sections of unimproved land, of the wild prairie. Like a remnant of colonial days, he saw an ancient church with a tall brown tower, and this in the midst of the general bustle and noise invited thoughts of tranquillity, of peace, of silence. The city

now began to dwindle. There were humble low buildings, as though surprised in their poverty and humility by the tramway line, but now again, on higher ground, there became visible high chimneys, dun smoke, smoke that darkened the horizon, floated off in a westerly direction, and vanished.

Bellegarde collected himself, concentrated his thoughts, began to think once more of the wording of his letter: "Doña Teresa Borja. Highly respected lady" . . . or should he say: "Friend"?

To the left the horizon opened up to his view. On the opposite side white and red garments hung up on cords were drying in the wind. The mudwalls of the road shut out the perspective. In the distance, above the brushwood and straw on top of the fences, in a wavy line the slopes enwrapped in purple haze rose into view. On the right hand the ridge of the hills became visible, with their yellow excavations and their dark glens.

"I take the liberty," continued Bellegarde in his musings regarding the contemplated letter, "to submit to you a matter on which depends the fate of my whole life. If my pretensions are excessive, may the fact be pleaded as my excuse that both yourself and Doña Inés have treated me with exquisite kindness and that I entertain great affection for her."

The prairie opened anew before his eyes, spacious and shining, and before his troubled sight unfolded scenery rich in luxurious vegetation and verdure, with groups of stately trees, with its carpet of flowers, with its white small houses upon which the sun poured its flaming rays. Below everywhere again mudwalls lining the road, and these concealed the whole spectacle, much as the drop curtain conceals the decorations on the stage. Then, toward the east, Bellegarde noticed the arms of a windmill, with white and red roses clambering over the walls, smoke rising in the clear air, caper bushes which detached themselves with their flowers from the somber background of the mountains.

And Bellegarde in his mind went on editing his letter: "Perhaps I ought to have informed Señorita Inés of my thoughts before taking a decisive step. . . ."

And while he was carefully searching for the proper words, his glance once more wandered over the scene outside. The

panorama of the savanna presented itself now dotted with buildings: red country houses, also blue ones; in the distance, above the violet line of the mountains, a cloud touched the dazzling white and the gleaming reflection of the snowy pinnacle. And before continuing his letter in his thoughts, Bellegarde reconsidered in his memory the exact phraseology he meant to employ, finding the terms improper, cold, inadequate.

And in the same measure in which the car advanced farther and farther, amidst a rattling of its wheels and the noises from outside, he altered again and yet again the language of it. The sun beats down on the plain, enamels with liquid gold the turf, plays upon the glass of the windows, loses itself in the leaves of the sycamores, rising above the grated gates.

Bellegarde was approaching the villa in which he dwelt, and he thought of leaving the car. But suddenly he resolved to go on as far as the church of Chapinero which he did not yet know, although he lived close by. This impulse was fortified by a vague desire to ask the aid of the Virgin of Lourdes at this, the most important hour of his life. Soon he came near, and a moment later saw the church with its incompleated towers, and with its round windows half darkened by the trees.

He crossed the little square, and went towards the huge gate of the edifice. The vivid light from outside was gathered and quenched in the naves of the church where a mystical shadow dwelt. As he stepped in he scarcely paid attention to the details of the structure, to the very high roof, to the fretted columns upholding it. In the front part, upon the cupola of the main altar, a ray of sunlight pierced its path between the luminous painted windows, darting straight for the beautiful tiles in somber hues; in the center of the church four large paintings, full of red, blue and yellow, were remarkable. In this mysterious half-light the expert glance of Bellegarde was gradually discovering the outlines, the profiles, the measurements of the edifice, the pulpit, the arches of the main body, the gallery, and, besides, the series of compartments in its windows, the tabernacle which covered almost the entire front, decorated in white and gold upon a blue ground.

Most of the bright color effects were lost in the semi-obscurity, but after a while this half-shadow turned into clearness, a soft clearness which filtered through the high lateral windows.



Again the sun penetrated to the middle of the church, and again the vast tabernacle became sharply defined. There, as in the style of the whole edifice, the acute angle dominated. It was its triumphal note, its apotheosis. But the eternal twilight killed the effect of the gold of the canopies and their splendor, that of the moldings and the arches. The tabernacle glowed like a precious jewel; it was a filagree of tiny pillars, of rosettes, of cupolas, of round painted windows, and of groins. In the center of it all, in a huge niche, was enthroned the Virgin of Lourdes.

From the main altar came the sonorous voice of Doctor Miranda. Adjoining the grating of the communion altar the red ribbons of a clerical order were sharply relieved by the black mantillas of the ladies. A clock slowly and solemnly struck the hour. The noise of steps became audible. The seats remain vacant for a moment; then they are once more filled. The crimson ribbons detach themselves again plainly from the somber black of the ladies' apparel. A shock. The whistle, the bell of a locomotive are heard. The whole neighborhood is filled with terrific noise, until at last it is lost in the highest vaults.

Doctor Miranda, with his back to the altar, now began the communion service, and Bellegarde saw Doña Ana coming out of one of the chapels. She crossed the church towards the communion altar, and her feeble frame seemed more slender than ordinarily. She raised her hands, and the habitual expression of pain, of sadness, had become more accentuated. Her lips scarcely moved, then with a gesture, with a movement of abnegation, of hope, she knelt down. And Bellegarde divined the cause of this anxiety, of this acerbity, of this prayer. This mass which a nephew of Doña Ana had come to say in the church of Chapinero, this sharing of the holy communion service, were for the benefit of Roberto, for his happiness. The old lady remained prostrated for a long time. At last she rose, and knelt down once more in the middle of the church, there where all the marvelous colors blended and shone. She lifted her face bedewed with tears to the Virgin, and it seemed as though this light which bathed her, these gay colors which impregnated her mantle, were the answer of the Virgin, the signal and token of comfort and support, the pledge of celestial protection.

On leaving the church Bellegarde approached Doctor Miranda and Doña Ana to invite them to partake of luncheon in his villa. They accepted and followed him on foot, athwart the flower beds where the shadow of the trees painted fantastic shapes.

After luncheon Doctor Miranda was called to the bed of an invalid to receive his confession, and Doña Ana and the Count remained alone in the dining-room.

In the full light of day Doña Ana's feebleness was even more noticeable. An unquiet suffering could be read on her countenance, and she frequently passed her trembling hands through her hair. Bellegarde felt his affection and respect for the old lady growing. He had divined this soul filled with delicacy and tenderness, possessed of an intense sensitiveness which doubled her suffering, a soul capable of every sacrifice and of self-forgetfulness, and endowed with a prodigious strength to contend against anguish and misfortune.

At last she broke the silence.

"Señor Bellegarde," she said in a low voice, "I have for some time been anxious to speak to you alone. But I was afraid I might encroach on your time, and it is with pleasure that I now profit by the occasion offered me."

Bellegarde listened to her with a profound expression of kindness and veneration. The steel-like keenness of his eyes was quenched, and his penetrating gaze softened and became full of compassion and tenderness.

"Pardon me for molesting you," she continued, "but I feel so much confidence in you."

And with a firm voice, emboldened by Bellegarde's evident sympathy, she went on:

"You are not aware of the series of misfortunes and calamities that have at last destroyed our wealth which formerly was so considerable. But it is generally known that in order to take shares in your enterprise we had to dispose of our most cherished estates. My own fate does not awe me. I need very little to live. But, Roberto . . ."

And in the tone in which she pronounced these last three syllables there lay all the love, all the affection, all the anxiety of the old lady.

"As I told you, he is already recovered. The accident of

day before yesterday seems to have passed without leaving permanent traces. . . . The Holy Virgin has heard my prayer. . . . To-day he has gone to the country . . . as he must not attend to business matters or forego the rest which the doctors have prescribed for him. . . . I trust you will make allowances for me if I take part in a matter of this kind, and that I turn to you in search of information and advice."

Bellegarde bowed in token of his great pleasure to be of service to her.

"They are buying up shares of the canalization scheme . . . for treble their cost, as I believe. . . . For us, after such constant misfortunes, it is an un hoped-for profit, one we owe to you. . . . I shall not endeavor to hide from you the fact that Roberto is strongly disposed to keep those shares, but I live full of anxieties and distrusts; bad luck has made me suspicious and pessimistic. . . . If this capital should be lost . . ."

And the features of Doña Ana reflected a sudden dread and trepidation; she passed her hands through her gray locks.

"I am going to open my heart to you, Señor Bellegarde," she murmured; "thus you will be able to counsel me better. You will forgive my frankness, will you not?"

Bellegarde could not help a movement of misgiving, or presentiment that perturbed him and which made him contract his eyebrows.

"Should this fortune be lost," continued Doña Ana, in a trembling voice, "I should have to abandon all hope of a marriage between Roberto and Inés. . . . He, as you doubtless know, will not marry if poor. . . . And this connection has been the dearest wish of both families . . . the last dream of my life. . . . I should die contented."

Doña Ana became silent and fixed her glance upon him. She observed with surprise that he had lost color. Bellegarde opened his eyes first very wide, and then closed them. His face flushed painfully, and a moment later turned deathly pale, while dense drops of sweat stood out on his forehead. He tried to speak, but his voice died in his throat. At last, after a distressing silence during which he resolved anew to sacrifice himself, and to conceal forever his love, he succeeded in controlling his thoughts and in remembering Doña Ana's question.

"To reply properly to your inquiry, to give advice worth

while, Señora," he managed at last to say in a voice strangely disturbed, "it will be necessary for me to consult figures and calculations, for they alone do not allow of error."

He did not permit his agitation to become manifest, but his voice was still unsteady and his cheeks remained pale.

"The nominal capital of the company amounts to ten million dollars up to the present," he went on.

And while he kept on talking about calculations and figures, and was very precise about amounts, he felt successive blows inside of him which darkened his thoughts, made him conscious that his hopes had been destroyed, his existence broken, his love dream buried.

"Roberto took eight founder's shares at ten thousand dollars," he nevertheless proceeded in his argument, "of which he has had to pay for merely the fourth part,—the first instalment. It might have been very risky, his having invested his entire capital in order to pay this first instalment, since he remained without funds to cover the others. But it so happened that this daring investment turned out fortunate for him, because when the enterprise had been listed on the stock market and quoted there, the Bourse at once doubled the value of the shares of the founders, so that Roberto has to-day 32,000 shares in sterling valuation, and owes upon them but 60,000 gold pesos."

And as Bellegarde still read incertitude and dread painted on the face of the old lady, he went on furnishing her more data on the matter.

"The thousand shares of ten thousand dollars each with which the company was founded, were converted into four million shares on a sterling basis," he explained. . . . "Don't they weary you, Doña Ana, these stock market details?" And since he saw that the maternal instinct had made her busy herself with matters else foreign to her, he made a new effort, in order to divert her sad reflections, to hold her attention to these prosaic details. He continued, therefore:

"These shares which are now on a sterling basis have been acquired with very little capital, and I should not be surprised if when the whole enterprise becomes sufficiently known on the bourses of Europe these shares should go still higher, so many times four pounds sterling, you understand. . . . The sole possible obstacle to such a rise might arise if peace were threat-

ened. . . . But it must not be forgotten that my enterprise ought to help conserve the peace. It is also certain that this enterprise of ours will bring out others of great promise. Roberto may win a great fortune in this way that might make him forever secure against any whims of chance. . . . In order to avoid your anxieties and bring instead tranquillity, it would be an easy matter to sell Roberto's shares, invest the capital thus secured in a safe way, for which purpose I should gladly cede to him when he is ready to do so, an equal number of shares to mine, at the initial price, so that he would be enabled to speed up his wedding, since you are so anxious for it."

"Ah, no, señor, not this," said Doña Ana with a movement which was half gratitude, half haughtiness, "you have done enough for us. To cede to us shares at a low price in order to render the value of ours secure,—such a thing we could not accept."

A smile passed and died away on the face of the old lady.

At the door Doctor Miranda appeared now, thus interrupting the confidential conversation.

"I start to-morrow for the Magdalena," said Bellegarde, while he conducted Doña Ana to her coach, "where I intend to remain for quite a while. Let me therefore bid you farewell. All I can do for Roberto's happiness and for your own peace of mind, I will do with pleasure, just as though it concerned my own mother, my own brother."

Doña Ana having taken him by both hands, pressed them with effusion, and felt that in those strong and willing hands, though to-day they were trembling with emotion, were all the sincerity of the words the Count had just spoken. She was convinced that her son had henceforth a loyal friend, a powerful protector.

"And now," added the Count, "I have a favor to ask, a request to make, since I shall have no leisure to bid adieu, to return to Bogotá. It is that you, dear lady, will present my remembrances, my attachment, my sincere wishes to Doña Teresa, . . . to Inés."

CHAPTER XIX

“ CHISPAS ”

ROBERTO opened the door of his room, went out into the corridor, and threw a glance towards the large corral of the hacienda. The crisp wind of early morning blew into his face, and through the fine drizzle there came to him the desperate bellowing of a cow, and the sweet scent of crocus and violet from the garden. In the stable could be heard the tramping of saddle horses and mules, and the jingle of stirrups, while at the same time the dry, hard hoofbeats of *la Alondra* against the flinty soil of the stalls became audible. Before looking at the latter, he paid a moment's attention to Maratón, who put his paws against the breast of his master and, with an affectionate whining, laid his head upon his shoulder. Roberto put the dog's head to his cheeks, and felt the heat in the dog's ears, while the latter nozzled him lovingly. The man put his arm around his dumb friend's neck and passed his hand caressingly along his strong, full back.

When the stable boy brought *Alondra*, the majordomo of El Sanfal, Casanova, first looked after the girths to see that they were moderately tightened, and then Roberto mounted, seized the bridle, and sat firmly in the saddle, while the horse took a few short elastic bounds. And then, followed by Casanova, he was lost in the depths of the fog.

They came down the rise, arrived at the plains, and while the mare broke into an easy canter, Roberto descried, through the dense mist, very dimly, as though moving in a dream, the contours of neighboring objects: the stone fences, the edges of the field close by with its thorny weeds, and all these objects at once vanished in the floating blanket of white, a large grayish rock, briars which in the wrapper of fog seemed to have been caught in snowy fleeces of sheep. The cows scenting the horses near, got up, snorted disgustedly and lazily arched their backs. From among the reeds and from the pasture, which was clipped quite short, there came intense odors.

Roberto and Casanova galloped along the plain, and in this solitude the sounds made by the hollow hoofbeats of Roberto's

mare, those of the majordomo's colt, reverberated distinctly in the air, while the tracks of the horses were crossed and recrossed by those of the big dog, the latter losing himself for a moment in the haze, reappearing and then diving into the same veil again that enveloped the whole landscape.

The prairie was only dimly to be perceived in this semi-darkness. The masses of trees showed no definite outlines, but surged forth like phantasmagoria, and were swallowed up at a few yards' distance. Roberto felt his spirits rise, nevertheless, under the influence of the fresh, moist air breathed forth by all this vegetation. His will power revived, and just as these nebulous strata began to be subjected to the influence of the ascending sun, his thoughts, too, became clearer and more tinged with hope.

They reached a small gate leading into the pastures. Casanova, spurring on his colt, rode ahead to undo the catch, and the gate opened with a grating, complaining noise.

In one spot of the vast pasture-ground the men had already driven the cattle into one big herd, and one by one they now yoked them to the horns broken, cut down or corroded and burnished by the straps with which they were tied.

The trousers of the men were twined up the middle of the leg, and showed their robust limbs, while the moisture had congealed the frieze garments, fashioned of coarse natural wool, and glistened on the beards of the laborers and the backs of the oxen. The spans of oxen crossed the fresh plowing ground, making headway with great trouble and sinking deep in the tracks left overnight between the stacks of corn that had been removed. They were yoked; they started to pull with great effort, while the hands of the men guiding the plow somewhat timidly, were shaking under the strain. But the plowshare sticks in the resisting soil; the straps of the oxen grind against the yoke, and the headpiece creaks. And at last, with a great noise of tearing and rending, the tough roots in the ground are torn out, and great slices of turf fall on both sides of the plowman.

A great uproar of rough voices, of shrill boys' voices, interspersed with whistling, with imprecations, breaks the silence of the vast plain, awakens the echoes of the huge rocks. It re-sounds syllable' by syllable, accent for accent, and it appears

almost like a grotesque dialogue between this horde of day laborers as they, with shouts of encouragement, with reproaches, with terms of endearment, incite the oxen along the new fields, jerk and quiver with the shaking of the plow handle and the burnished horns of their faithful beasts of burden.

Roberto followed the plowmen in order to breathe from near by and with relish the reek of the oxen and the odor of the newly turned earth. Walking thus along and inhaling this acrid and healthful scent, he noticed with interest the surprise of the many thousands of insects which, full of fright, were wagging on the edges of the pieces of turf that had been turned up by the sharp plowshares,—how they wriggled and tried to hide at the bottom of the furrow on feeling the cataclysm of their little world, exposed to the pitiless rays of a light hitherto unknown to them.

After giving his detailed instructions for the labors to be performed by the men, reprimanding some of the careless farmhands, and adjusting the plows themselves, Casanova on his colt followed Roberto, with whom he returned to the hacienda and the house.

The ladies, wrapped up in big square shawls, and their cheeks rosy from the nipping air, came out to the veranda to welcome him.

“ But, my son,” remarked Doña Ana, with an air of apprehension and reproach, “ so early! And then on such a spirited animal! ”

Roberto dismounted, and kissed her.

“ No, dear mother,” he said, “ it is Alondra, and she knows me. Early? This cool air has done me much good.”

Doña Ana shook her head to indicate insistence on her warning, but Doña Teresa, always cheerful, remarked that she had never seen Roberto looking better. And Inés, pointing with her hand, exclaimed:

“ Look, Roberto, at the effect produced by the mist! ”

Only the hillock on which stood the house was clearly visible in the floating whiteness. But a few steps away the view was shut off by the curtain of fog which began to shine with a dim light, and this was becoming more and more intense. The sun, still invisible, was, however, announcing its returning splendors by a curious glow above the hills, and at the very first rays of



light, the great bank of the thick haze started to move away, to undulate lazily, and to pierce this mass of white that spread out over the whole length and width of the savanna. It was now slowly falling back, as though gently pushed out of the way, toward the west. And then there stood revealed a mass of black trees, in distinct shape, as if engraved, against a background of milky hue, the latter fleeing swiftly. And next there appeared, with the vagueness of a dream, lagoons the color of molten steel, tongues of islands, marshes and wide-spreading meadows of a pale delicate green, while all the time the mist flew off further and further, but rolling upwards, each time forming an immense mass denser and denser, more luminous, with rosy reflections, with changing phantoms of a pale purple hue. As it gathered into a giant mass towards the mountains to the west, the meadow lands and pastures sprang out clearly, and up on the heights, in the zenith, there were forming openings, through which peeped the pure azure of the sky, waxing larger and deeper and bluer. The sun had triumphed. It now shone brilliantly over the entire savanna, and the pools on its surface, imitating the blue of the cloudless heaven, mirrored its beauties. Only over the river there was still a layer of mist, following the curves of its course, but it was of a thin, delicate texture. The whole enormous bank of moisture, like an inundation retreating and leaving the fields fresh and humid, was fleeing in the direction of the horizon, and was being dashed to spray against the chain of mountains in the west.

"See, Roberto," said Inés, "over there on the horizon,—those grand fringes: the horizontal penciling of the mist, and on top of it the gilt fringe of the summits!"

The sun outlined the objects, and the shadows were becoming more defined. In the far distance the mists, still pursued by the sun, were now climbing the mountain range, where they rose, attained the summit, afterward disentangled themselves, and then broke in pieces, forming thick, glittering clusters. There, too, the condensed clouds rested, and next, with an ascending movement, painting violet shadows upon the mountain chain, they floated off into the azure ether.

"Inés," Roberto remarked with his weak convalescent's voice, in which there was a broken accent, a remnant of melancholy,

“there goes the mist, over there, slowly, as though taking leave of this earth much against its will.”

“My son,” asked Doña Ana, “shall we not take our milk now?” She did not for a moment forget the doctor’s instructions and the regimen prescribed by him.

Roberto took the arm of his mother like a lover, and together they went down to the farmyard, where they were enveloped by the pleasant smell of cattle, by the tumult of bellowing cows, the deafening lowing of the calves, and the clattering of milk pails amidst the rattle of the huge earthenware pans now covered with the rich foam that rose to the top. The sun gilt the backs of the cows that in breathing blew the air vehemently through their nostrils. The calves pushed against the udders, and bedabbled themselves with rich milk, and after letting go for an instant, would with a grunt of pleasure begin to suck again, would drink, and lose brilliant drops which glittered in the clear light.

“It would be profitable to teach the automatic calf of the inventor Sánchez de Peñanegra, and to see whether it could do as well as these yearling calves,” said Roberto, with a burst of laughter, as he lifted his glass of milk.

In the immense curve of the heights the clear crystal of the sky enveloped all, without a trace of vapor, without a blot. The blue ether lay like a benediction over the earth, seemed to adhere to the hills, tinted the cliffs, floated on the waves of the river, mirrored itself in the quiet waters of pools, and this sapphire splendor enwrapped all, submerged all, inundated all. Far away in the depths of the westerly firmament, in the diaphanous atmosphere, at an immeasurable distance, the snow-capped Tolima reared its crest.

Maratón ran to and fro, frightening the calves, but rather liked by the cows.

They went back. Nearing the house the dog raised a flight of pigeons which, with a flapping noise almost resembling a burst of applause, rose in the air, flew towards the pasture grounds, following the course of the river in sweeping turns, let the breeze bear them on for a spell, floated with the currents of air, seemed to be about to settle on a meadow, and then with a balanced, rhythmic motion during which the sunlight glit-

tered on the white of their wings and vanished again, they turned in the direction of the house, described a wide spiral and came down in a flock on the roof. But the voice of Inés, who scattered a handful of kitchen refuse for them, brought them down again in the inner courtyard.

"Like the souls," said Roberto, "who in the Divine Comedy come at the compassionate call of Dante."

"I will now ring the bells for the first time for mass," he continued after a while. "There I see Milan and Bibiana already coming."

The bell sounded, scattering its cheerful notes through the wide plain. On the brow of the nearest hill could be descried far off a group of rustics who were lost to view a moment after in the ravine, only to reappear again, and who, hearing the bell, quickened their pace.

On that day the wedding of Milan Gil, the majordomo of General Ronderos, was to be celebrated, his bride being Bibiana, she of *El Consuelo*, who with her mother dwelt anew at *El Sauzal*. As Socarraz had made an effort to disturb the love affairs of Milan and Bibiana by having posed as a wooer of the latter, and as the quarrels of the two rivals had been of frequent occurrence, Socarraz was never seen either at the estate or by his former masters, because he strongly disliked meeting the latter. The disputes between Socarraz and Milan Gil — whom people usually nicknamed Chispas,— happened mostly on the roads, at the market and sometimes on mountain paths where they encountered each other. Milan had been victorious in his wooing, to the satisfaction of everybody, and especially of Bibiana's mother, who lived in constant dread caused by the rivalry of the two lads, forever fearing a calamity growing out of it, as she had stated while still at *El Consuelo*.

This group of persons now presented themselves in the house. The two lovers came holding each other's hands. Their slender figures contrasted singularly in the smiling cheerfulness of that forenoon with the dark costumes of their surrounding friends. Milan, tall, graceful, with his hooked nose, his black and closely trimmed beard looked like an Arab. From his face, browned by the sun, shone happiness. The bride was a piquant brunette, with a fresh mouth and two rows of magnificent teeth that gave vivid expression to her smile and her words. Her wealth

of hair, black and wavy, was gathered quite simply on the back of her head into a white ribbon, and fell with exquisite grace down over her shoulders.

Inés, who was to act as Bibiana's bridesmaid at the wedding ceremony, took her off to a room to help her don her bridal costume, the same which she herself had made. Meanwhile General Ronderos, Chispas's best man, came out to the veranda, hugged the groom and presented him with thirteen ounces of gold, which were to be the marriage pledge of Chispas at the ceremony. The General felt a real affection for Chispas. The latter had served him since childhood and had accompanied him on his last campaign. First, as his ordnance officer, and later, after repeated heroic feats, as chief of a company. Throughout Chispas had demonstrated his loyalty and his valor. During the mass the assembled throng of country people filled the chapel to overflowing, so that they crowded even into the adjoining vestibule. Groups of perspiring farmers, panting from the haste they had made in order to arrive in time, were still coming until the outer hall was likewise filled. Roberto, who had remained in the rear, took notice of the brown linen dresses, of the new frieze garments, of the starched collars, the well-groomed heads. And with approval he saw that these country people reflected in their carriage, in their clothes, the well-being and the ease, sheltered from penury and far away from the dangers of war, which these better times made possible.

General Ronderos and Inés were assisted by Casanova and Doña Teresa, godparents during the nuptial benediction. Inés sat down at the piano, placed expressly at the farthest end of the corridor, and played during mass.

When the ceremony had been concluded, the newly married couple passed into the dining-hall where Inés had a meal served to them, and then Milan and Bibiana mounted their horses to go to *La Laguna*, General Ronderos' estate, where Chispas had his house all ready.

All went into the outer hall in order to watch the happy couple depart, and they did not leave before they had seen Chispas and his young wife turn the first bend in the highroad, where they were lost to view.

Suddenly there came the sound of a shot in the far distance, and then another and still another.

"Socarraz," shrieked Bibiana's mother, seized by mortal fear. "It cannot be, since Socarraz is on the Magdalena, with the canalization enterprise," replied Roberto, who thereupon mounted Alondra and went off like lightning, followed by Casanova. They rushed down the slope, could again be seen on the level ground, jumped over the enclosure, and took the road at a gallop.

Those assembled in the outer hall waited in deep anxiety. For another time they made out Roberto from afar, stretched almost at full length upon the black mare, and behind him, quite a distance in the rear, they descried Casanova. Moments of anxiety, of solicitude, of horrible suspense. No one spoke or moved. Doña Ana, quite faint from all this excitement, overcome by this new perplexity, full of apprehension because of Roberto, sought refuge in the chapel.

Now the black mare reappeared in the distance, galloping swiftly. Doña Ana, guessing that Roberto was coming back, came out of the house, and stopped amidst the flower beds.

"Yes, it was Socarraz, after all," said Roberto, as he drew near. "He opened fire upon Chispas, but did not hit him. We were, however, unable to overtake him, since the scoundrel was very well mounted. I instructed Casanova to accompany the bridal couple."

As soon as he had heard those shots and the name of Socarraz had been mentioned, there separated from the group of expectant rustics a very straight and robust, cleanly shaven, elderly man. During the wait, putting his trembling hand to his forehead to see better, he had been able to observe the road, had seen Roberto come back, and had then heard about the latest doings of Socarraz. Then he lifted his shaking hands to heaven and gave vent to his feelings with words that came from his dry throat:

"Accursed son!"

## CHAPTER XX

### THE BETTER CROSSING

RAISING a cloud of dust in the road, another horseman could be seen in the distance. A new surprise for Doña Ana. A boy

finally arrived, dismounted, and handed a paper to Roberto.

"What is it, my son?" asked Doña Ana, with fresh anxiety in her eyes.

"A short note, a very pretty one, from Doña Aura, begging me to see her at once, saying that she needs me urgently."

And turning to the boy he said, "Tell Doña Aura that I will go to see her this afternoon."

Some hours later Roberto was striding through the flower beds that led to the house of Cebaderos. The old alder trees which on either side had formed an umbrageous path, were gone. Their trunks, cut down near the ground, showed the strokes of the ax. Some roots had begun to send out shoots, but their efforts had led to nothing.

Doña Aura conducted Roberto to her study, perfectly overburdened with books and papers.

"Dolores suffers from headache and has locked herself in," she told him, "and Ramón keeps his siesta. But all the better! We can talk all by ourselves. I have to consult you on a point of the highest importance to myself. It concerns the climax of the novel which I am writing at present: *The Elm and the Ivy*. It abounds with the choicest sentiment, and is full of original observations. It may prove my master work."

From the next room Montellano could be heard snoring, flute-like voices, thunderous ones, breathings through the nose, cut short by words uttered evidently in a nightmare. Doña Aura, after putting on her spectacles, steered for a table where there was an abundance of memorandum books, as well as small bundles of sheets tied together with pink or blue ribbons, and on which grand titles such as: "Plan," "Entanglement," "Climax," appeared in huge letters.

"Ouch, . . . oh, oh, . . . ouch!" she piercingly shrieked.

"What ails you?" asked Roberto, with polite solicitude.

"This hand. See here, it is a cramp. The fingers contract painfully. Doctor Agüeros has explained it to me. I have what they call Writer's Cramp. But I am getting over it already. . . . Now, listen."

And she started out with a shrill, strident voice:

"Epilogue. . . . When they entered, Aurora was kneeling in a corner of the room. She raised her hands toward heaven, pitiful, imploring."

But the lady was interrupted. A broken moan was heard from Montellano, as if from a man being strangled.

As it died on the air, the lady continued:

"Aurora, beloved Aurora," exclaimed her father, "rise, be happy, here I have brought you a husband, Manfredo."

Again, from the adjoining room: "Help, help, they're murdering me," cried the stammering, raucous voice of the millionaire.

Roberto got up from his seat, suddenly affrighted. But Doña Aura calmed him.

"It is nothing. Ramón has dyspepsia. . . . A nightmare." And she went on reading in an even voice:

"The young girl arose and ran towards Manfredo with open arms."

"The safe, the safe, let go the safe!" bellowed Montellano in the next chamber.

And Doña Aura pursued her reading undisturbed:

"Catalina, the poor widow, dwelt in the grange of the castle. Manfredo and Aurora are protecting her. Juana is the wife of the gardener attached to the castle. She lives in the midst of flowers. Only the wicked man suffers. He is in jail."

A shout, a roar, a bouncing noise on the floor of the other room, and with hair disheveled, yawning and stretching his limbs Montellano bursts in the study of his spouse.

"I was dreaming that they had broken my iron safe open," he said in a sleepy drawl, "and that they were just getting ready to throttle me. . . . All right. . . . When you two have finished, I shall be waiting for you outside, Roberto."

So Doña Aura kept on:

"In this other scene they kill the heroine, Aurora."

She took up another booklet of notes, and pursued her reading:

"Epilogue: The pale moon, like a small vessel, was rowing in the extreme altitude of the firmament. . . . Sleeping Nature appeared to take a peaceful rest like a child. . . . The night owl, just like a sentinel, at the dawn of day reposed in a niche of the tower. The tired wind was asleep in the chalice of the flowers. . . ."

The gruff, big voice of Montellano was again heard rumbling outside:

"Here I shall have to change everything. The rent you people have been paying Alejandro was a mere pittance."

The muttering of the amazed farmers could be heard.

"Is asleep in the chalices of the flowers. And before an iron tomb on which the name of Aurora was to be seen, Manfredo was kneeling, and . . ."

But Montellano's deep bass broke in: "I shall treble the rents, and if you don't like it, pack up and get out."

And now again Doña Aura: "Manfredo was kneeling, and with a look as sad as the bleating of a stricken deer. . . ."

"I am going to turn these haciendas into pasture ground, and all these vagabonds may go to the devil."

Then Montellano, impatient because Roberto did not show up, once more came into his wife's study.

"My dear woman," he said, "don't bore Roberto with your nonsense."

As they left the room together, Roberto with a heavy heart came across the group of saddened farmers, their heads hanging down, and heard them humbly protesting. Some women amongst them were imploring Montellano with tears in their eyes.

"Roberto," said Montellano when they went out, paying no attention to the reiterated complaints of these country people, "you must show me the spot where the old channel of the water drain used to be. Alejandro had the hacienda for his pleasure, whereas with me it is a matter of business. He left two strips of arable land for these wood ducks. That means good land wasted, not utilized."

"That is because Alejandro knows that the useless may be useful."

"I am going to drain those pieces of land," Montellano went on.

They proceeded along the garden paths bordering on the pond where new vegetation had sprung up.

"How much land is lost here, how many useless animals," shouted Montellano.

Some of the ducks were sleeping with their heads on their backs, while others, in the attitude of the self-sacrificing pelican,



were picking vermin from their breasts, or else waddling along on the ground as though painfully reflecting on their lot, then plunging into the water and cleaving its still surface, leaving a wake. They would flutter and rise just above the water, while from their glistening and burnished plumage pearls of moisture would run. One jealous duck, full of anger, launched itself in a queer run over the surface of the pond, raising a swell, then attacked a rival and tore in its furor feathers out its body, and the feathers floated on the disturbed water.

"I know how to make a profit out of all this," argued Montellano. "By draining this pool, I shall have a good place for the calves that are now kept near the house. The ducks I'll sell in the market. The same as to the trees in this garden. I have already stripped it of more than fifteen thousand pesos' worth of lumber."

Roberto looked anew with sadness and anger at the grove of ancient trees that led to the house, now laid waste and destroyed. How many times he had played with Alejandro in the old days under the shade of those alder trees!

A boy came up.

"Would you sell me some fruit out of your garden?" he asked.

"Everything is for sale," exclaimed Montellano, "plums, pears, all. . . . Just look, Roberto," he spoke, counting carefully the paper money the boy had given him. "You people never sold as much as the fourth part of an arroba of this fruit. The orchard now brings me in a matter of a thousand to a thousand and fifty pesos a month, if not more, while I stay here. You never did anything with it except spend money. I bet that such a thing never entered your mind while you were here, and that you did not think it was ever possible to draw money out of it, did you?"

"Never," replied Roberto, "never."

"Same thing with the chapel. I am also going to make something out of that. What is the good of it now? The little oratory is quite enough for the purpose."

"What are you going to do with the chapel?" interrupted Roberto, filled with alarm to think that this man was on the point of destroying the building which rose beside the manor

house, and where in times gone by masters, servants and farmers had met to celebrate Christmas eve. His mind reverted to that sacred and mysterious spot which inspired respect with its moss-grown roof, its venerable front, its nail-studded heavy gate, its clock tower, whence the sonorous bell every Sunday had scattered throughout the neighboring countryside its clear notes, for many years, for centuries even, summoning so many generations.

"What I mean to do with the chapel, you say? Well, a mill probably. The taking off of water is here no longer permitted. And it is a magnificent site."

Roberto, who felt uneasy, full of anxiety, wished to take his leave. He desired to get away from all this, not silently to acquiesce in such spectacles of destruction, of barbarism, which to him seemed almost a kind of murder.

"I shall accompany you," said Montellano. "I shall take you as far as the boundary line of *El Sauzal*, over there, as far as that stone fence."

Suddenly the noise of a distant train began to be audible. Montellano, to Roberto's surprise started to run, leaped over an enclosure, and took a short turn through the intervening territory. There were two high fissures in the rocks, both crowned by low stone walls; in the background the railroad. The gleaming rails between the gravel beds which were exposed to the powerful sunlight, stretched far away, and were lost at last to view at a bend of the blue-tinted savanna. Right in the midst of the track a full-blooded Durham bull was standing. Montellano tried hard to frighten the bull away and save him from the approaching train. But the beast followed the track steadily, and turned around now and then, shaking his head and ready to attack. Now a dull, rumbling noise could plainly be heard, decreasing, augmenting, losing itself for an instant, again increasing, and announcing alarmingly the invisible train. And Montellano, jumping with difficulty over the railway sleepers, crushing rudely the cinders on his path, slipping between the rails, tottering on the gravel, followed still the bull in his desperate attempts to frighten him away, to scare him over to the safe side, to drive him towards the bank below. But the animal, without perceiving its danger, by turns prepared for an attack and again ran be-

tween the track. And already the train was nearing the curve of the embankment.

But now Montellano saw his own danger, quickly slid down the declivity and got on his feet again. Then, in safety, he exclaimed cheerfully and tranquilly:

"All right, let them kill him if they will. I await the outcome gladly."

Second after second the snorting and concussion grew with a ferocious insistence, with menacing power. At the bend, with a still increasing volume of noises and in a huge cloud of smoke, the threatening train became at last visible. Now it came down the incline. The steel rails were trembling and vibrating, clanking like an anvil under the strokes of the hammer. The engine shrieked with alarm, with desperation. The whistling was repeated a hundred fold by the echoes of the mountains. And in the midst of a catastrophic clamor, vomiting steam, flinging fragments of live coal about, in the midst of the fiery sheen of polished copper and steel, the locomotive resistlessly advances, reaches the crossing. The earth is shaking, . . . a terrific shock . . . a fiendish bellow . . . a crunching of bones . . . a breath of heat . . . the odor of singed flesh . . . another wave of steam . . . drops of blood . . . and with a last outburst of shrill lamentations the train is past, is fleeing towards the distant landscape, disappears in smoke, leaving in the silence of the prairie the violent vibrations of the rails, like the tune of two ropes of steel.

"They will certainly pay me well for this," shouted Montellano, with loud laughter. "Thousand dollars? No, indeed, sir, but four, five thousand; just as in the case of the other bull whom they killed on me last month . . . at the same spot precisely . . . in this pasture. . . . I shall collect my five thousand, and with that commission added, four bulls instead of one. Suits me. It's all business."

They soon arrived at the boundary line of *El Sauzal*.

Roberto said good-by to Montellano, but the latter detained him still another instant.

"Tell me, Roberto," he said, "as you know this kind of land well and as I intend to put in a claim for those bulls, which is the best type of crossing in your opinion?"

"The best crossing," replied Roberto, while he opened a

gate leading to his estate, "for your purpose, the best type of crossing, the most productive one? Bulls with locomotives."

## CHAPTER XXI

## TWILIGHT

AFTER passing the confines of his estate, Roberto met his mother and Inés, Doña Teresa and Doctor Miranda, who were taking an evening stroll, and went with them to the brow of the hill whence a very picturesque view was to be had.

At a bend a wall of granite rose abruptly. The edges of the rock formed in the face of the stone oval openings, rows of columns, and seemed fantastic creatures, winged dragons.

Separated from the wall, isolated, rose a gigantic tower. One seemed to see here marked by the layers in the rock, the successive and ascending impact of the waves during the flood, and from top to bottom, the tremendous shocks of those tempests, those scorplings by the sun, those erosions made by the centuries. Out of the age-worn rock the howling wind is forever roaring, and scatters about the valley eagle-feathers, blood-stained bones. And in the sides of the huge tower alternate red and whitish stains with blackish stripes. The bushes drive their roots into the small fissures and shake and tremble above the abyss. Twining plants, their leaves spotted with purple, clutch the cracks of the rock, and float above them in trailing festoons. Delineated clearly against the light rise tall leaves of the *quiches* and *motuas* that affect this place, similar in shape to bundles of swords. On the summit, where the wind never sleeps, there undulate, bend and rise, the long hairy tops of the *pajonales*.

They went back. Doctor Miranda, Doña Ana formed the rear. In front, keeping silent, were Inés and Roberto, scanning the western heavens, put into a pleasant frame by this friendly and caressing landscape, by the odors of pennyroyal and rue, by this soft light. The crouching cows, full-fed, went peaceably grazing, nibbling and chewing the cud by turns. Up on the hill, their silhouettes dimly defined on the horizon, the mares are pasturing.

At the opposite side the prairie shines in all the richness of its coloring. A fringe of clouds is veiling the sun for a moment, and the colors mingle. A dun haze, quite uniform, covers the wide plain from end to end. But the cloud passes, and all the original tints reappear clearly,—greens and reds and blues and yellows of vegetation, the herds of cattle, the gold of the sunflowers, the brown or red roofs and towers of distant villages, the river with its tranquil waters, smooth and glaring.

In a lengthy piece of ground, in full sunlight, between two broad shadows, Roberto made out *El Risco*, the ancient hacienda now lost, its groves, its large rocks, its old house, the monumental portal—far away, forming a white point. And in the placidity of this late afternoon there passed through his recollection visions of years seeming already remote, years in which he and Inés, looking at the same panorama, towards the sinking sun, caressed by the well-known landscape, by the penetrating scent of mint and rue, surveyed the slopes and the plain, crossed the savanna together, made the gravel on the hills crunch under their feet, the meadows of *El Sauzal* and *El Risco* echo the hoofbeats of their swift horses. And by a movement that was almost mechanical, as though pushed on by his own remembrances, by the romance which emanated from all the surrounding objects, he approached Inés and offered her his arm.

The wind carried to him the vibrant voice of Doctor Miranda, the gay laughter of Doña Teresa. There arose in the peace of twilight harmonious murmurs like echoes of well-being, of lively movement, of wealth. The flock of sheep came down to the plain, bleating, the snow of their fleece passing through the ravine. On the footpaths of the slope the workmen who returned from their labor sang lustily. There resounded from the newly plowed fields the shouts of the men. From the high-road rose the whistling of the muleteers, the heavy rumble of their carts. The humming of the threshers could be distinguished far away. The wind carried the clamor of the trains in the distance through the still air, and but a white cloudlet of dissolving steam was left in the azure of the sky. Nearer, immense masses of cattle on the plains advanced at the sound of the horn.

The sun set the floating clouds aflame in the west and spread a rosy mantle over the whole prairie.

Roberto's pessimism and the anxiety of his mother vanished in this sea of peace, cheerfulness and repose.

Doctor Miranda approached Roberto.

"You remember," he said, "the depressing circumstances which we took as a text last New Year's Day at Aunt Teresa's house? Well, now, in the midst of this hymn of peace, another text of Zachary occurs to me to counterbalance that: *Semen pacis erit; vinea dabit fructum suum, et terra dabit germen suum, et coeli dabunt rorem suum,*" he exclaimed with his arms spread out. "He will water the seed of peace, and then the vine will yield its grapes, the earth its fruits, and Heaven its dew."

When they arrived at the house, they were met with letters from Alejandro bearing the Canalization stamp: two C's interlaced.

The letter said:

"I am writing you from Puerto Borja, a place recently born on the margin of the Magdalena as an affectionate distinction conferred by Bellegarde, who wished to baptize with the name of one of our ancestors this spot of which some day it may be said 'A settlement founded but yesterday, and to-day a powerful city.' The photographs which I sent you will convey to your mind a rather exact idea of Puerto Borja. It is an immense esplanade which in the background is closed by a mountain, on the coast line with the canalization buildings and on the front the river. The houses, which arrive here numbered from the United States, go up as though by magic. The structure where the management is housed, and in which Bellegarde and I dwell, is a magnificent residence in which nothing is lacking. We have electric light, fans which purify the air, and even a piano. It is incredible how all this has been done. I have seen the movable docks at work. The constricted water precipitates itself at the center of the river and itself, too, excavates the bed of the river, sweeps up the sand and gravel in a twinkling, dies in the bottom of the drain, and conveys the mud towards the ocean. And when the current is unable to do so, we have the dredgers that stretch forth their iron arms, carry them through the air, sink them in the river, dig at the bottom, and next, with the measured movement of giants, remove the mud, take it up, and deposit it on the shore.

All this goes on in the midst of the bustle of the steam launches, that are shooting up and down, whistle, waken the echoes of the forest and impart life to these solitudes. In a word, it means the resurrection of a dead world. In parenthesis, while I am writing you in haste, with all this noise of the launches and the infernal clamor of the chains on the dredgers going on incessantly, I forgot to tell you that we had a holiday yesterday. We christened by the names of *The Inés* and *The Bellegarde* the two most important vessels of the company. We also broke a bottle of champagne against the prow of the ships. Tell her this when you see her next, provided you are not actually at her side when this letter reaches you.

"How much I like this work! At times I think I obey a law of heredity (be it said between us and without meaning to brag), and I recall the fact that it was our ancestor, Don Juan Borja, who as President of this viceroyalty, busied himself regulating the navigation of this river and establishing ports for commerce. Sometimes I say to myself as I pace these shores: Here it was where, centuries ago, he was working for civilization, and here it is where I am continuing his work.

"I have spoken to you of the canalization labors, but not of the colonization. And yet the latter is the prettiest part. Imagine four thousand toilers: Antioquians, Jamaicans, Chinese, handling the ax, the machete, not in order to cut off heads, but to thin the forest, to fell cedars, the most precious of timbers, which they throw into the current that is intended to carry them to Europe. Forest groves of rubber trees, bleeding at all hours, are the most productive branch of the whole enterprise. We have besides, thousands of *fanegadas* of soil clear of the mountains, rendered healthful, cultivated, covered with plane trees, and the exportation of bananas in the launches is enormous. All this, at which Karlonoff was laughing so much in his dissertations chockful of scientific statistics and unscientific Gallicisms, is already a fact, and inside of five years it will be a miracle, realized by science and money. Enclosed you will find some clippings from the *Economiste Belge* and some other periodicals, so that you can see that they already have confidence in this enterprise in Europe. The quotations are marked with red pencil. You will see that the shares at one pound sterling each are quoted at three pounds

at the Stock Exchange of London. This confidence, this enthusiasm, which in foreign parts awakens interest in our enterprise, are a tremendous force, and in this way, with other enterprises and in other fields of endeavor, we can to-day lift this country to new levels.

"In my whole life I have never spent a time that was as pleasant as this one, endeavoring to make this river serviceable and navigable, dominating Nature, eradicating mountains and dense forests.

"I suspended my letter here, since I had to inspect the work at several points. You cannot possibly imagine what the clearing of a forest really means, what a scene of grandeur,—how tragic, even, it is. Who could describe it worthily?

"Between the shadows of impenetrable glades one hears the blows of the ax. The woodcutters by turns attack a giant cedar, the king of the forest. From its higher branches up, full of wind and sonorities, the tree seems to look down with disdain upon the creatures busy at its roots, creatures tiny as pigmies. But they, persistent, untiring, go on delivering blow upon blow. The grateful aroma of rosin embalms the air. The gleaming edges of the axes glitter when raised on high towards the light. The chips are flying. The axes rise and fall. They bite, whirr, and keep on coming deeper and deeper in the trunk. They already are beyond the bark, where they have marked a white circle. They are nearing the heart of the tree. The cedar, undaunted, haughty, erect, still dominates the forest, without quaking, without trembling. It ignores or scorns death. And the men with their axes, panting, emitting whistles of fatigue, but nevertheless tenacious, go on dealing blow after blow, while the chips fly about and their axes are flashing. They have now passed beyond the white layer, they are attacking the reddish core. The cedar bows blandly, daintily, coquettishly, as though rocked by the wind. But there is a frightful booming, a crashing salute, and the gigantic tree lies on the ground, with its foliage crushed, its mighty branches broken.

"Impossible to paint either with brush or pencil these scenes, these landscapes which are constantly before my eyes. Impossible to copy this Nature in which vegetation, almost as if maddened by the heat, twists the trunks, cracks the branches,



weaves and reweaves in close union curtains of clinging plants, crowds the knots on the bindweed, strangles the trees, extends on the soil new shoots seeking the light, pushes the foliage towards the top. In a very fever of life, in an overabundance of sap, in an impetus of expansion vegetation there covers not alone the earth, but even pierces space and attempts to conquer it.

"I cannot close this letter without speaking to you of Bellegarde. What a man! He maintains an even balance between the heart and the head. He knows the enterprise with all its mechanism, as he knows a sonata with all its notes. At five in the morning he has already washed and shaved, and is attending to his correspondence with Europe, the Mississippi, Argentina. He toils the whole day long, attends to every detail, passes from his vessel to the felling of trees in the woods, from the woods to the dredges, to the gasoline launches. He orders all, keeps this complicated piece of machinery always oiled, and after thirteen hours of hard labor, never having breathed a word of complaint, without any disharmony, he sits down in the little cabin of *The Inés* to eat his meal, correct, in a Tuxedo, monocle adjusted, a flower in his buttonhole, a smile on his lips.

"I have seen Bellegarde only once excited, and that was on account of an incident which I am going to relate to you.

"In spite of the great heat here, Socarraz has given us a lot of trouble. Since his arrival, Bellegarde, without mentioning the occurrence on board the *Bicontinental*, had treated him with his cold and measured courtesy, and Socarraz had supposed that Bellegarde with his exquisite manners desired to confer a special distinction on him, a decided proof of friendship, and did not spare his familiarities. Soon there came his fits of drunkenness, his noisy quarrels, even attempts at fomenting rebellion among the squads of laborers placed under his care. Fortunately he found the work too hard, the sun too hot, the food not to his taste, and asked, therefore, that he be placed somewhere else where he might be enjoying the shade. Bellegarde, who had hitherto overlooked all the shortcomings of the publisher of *El Escorpión*, agreed to let him *have the post* he desired, and so to please him he gave him, what

do you think? A job with the cashier. He meant by giving him this proof of his confidence, to sharpen his sense of honor and of delicacy. Nevertheless, very soon there began mistakes, irregularities, shortages in the cash, until, one day, after having had enough of all this, Bellegarde discovered a defalcation in the accounts much larger than the preceding ones. He summoned the guilty one, demonstrated his culpability, warned him, required of him to make up the deficiency or else to quit. But the other protested, denied, tried to pass on the guilt to his fellow-workers, treated Bellegarde as a slanderer, until the latter, unable to bear any more of this, dismissed him. Thereupon Escipi3n, vomiting atrocious threats, blind with anger, launched himself upon Bellegarde. I saw the knife flash in his hand, very near the neck of the Count, but he, remaining quite cool, disdainful, like lightning seized that arm, took hold of the wrist, and twisted it with Herculean strength, until the knife slipped out of it, and Socarraz fell to the ground begging for pity. Bellegarde merely turned his back on him, and Escipi3n went away menacing the Count with his fist."

At Puerto Borja, a month later, Bellegarde and Alejandro, in the dining-room of *The In3s* were seated at the table, after having gone through a very hot day, refreshed by a bath, and with the pleasure of great thoughts, with the satisfaction that comes from a victorious fight, were breathing the cool air that came from the forest, the fresh breeze that ascended from the river, and their musings were just as rosy and vast as the horizon before their eyes.

The sun was going down, and after so much bustle during the day everything became calm. The clatter and noise of the colony seemed to vanish in the distance. There reigned around the vessel a silence only interrupted by the clucking of the water that came lapping against the sides of the ship. The tints of twilight floated in the air, gathered over the waters of the Magdalena, with fleeting opalescent glints.

Over the river were cruising serenely some flocks of herons, which afterwards flew off to near-by pools, where they went to mirror themselves in the still water.

Suddenly the surrounding space became aflame, and everything wrapped in a pink vapor. The rocks seemed of red

marble. The chains flashed like molten iron. The river rolled waves of flame. The fronds of the palms became plumes of scarlet. The foliage all about began to resemble flags of crimson, and the dripping cables were distilling drops of fire. The stay-ropes on the dredgers, still wet, stretched skywards like giant arms dipped in blood.

A whistle was heard, and its echo was lost in the depths of the forest. Then, the clamor of wheels working against the current of the river, the snorting of a steamer. It is *The Bellegarde*. And in a bend of the river, behind a veritable grove of parasite plants, begin to loom two smoke-stacks, and big clouds of smoke. A turn of the wheel, again sharp whistling, and the ship is nearing *The Inés*. The commander of the vessel takes a leap, and respectfully touching his cap where a double C is shining, hands to Bellegarde a package of letters.

"One is for you, Alejandro," says the Count.

"Ah!" says Alejandro, "it is from Roberto, news from Bogotá . . . let us see!"

"Dear Fausto: I am kept here in Santafé for the last two weeks, after four weeks of rest in *El Sauzal*, in a peace which I cannot call Octavian, but rather Ronderinerian. But there arrive the two periodicals, *La Revaluación* and *La Integridad*, with their phrases like 'the night of Nineveh,' and something about 'those of the mystery,' etc., in short, attacks on Ronderos, on the canalization project, on the government, on Bellegarde, on us. So I came. I found hostile atmosphere here. There are people who have been impressed with the article by Sánchez Méndez, 'An Abyss without Bottom' (as if he knew any abysses with bottom). González Mogollón, the unwitting propagandist, went through all the stores, with a flushed face, gesticulating, and repeated in his shrieking manner the sensational phrase of the article: 'We will not omit saying that there is in this contract a stinger, and lying in ambush beyond a field full of brambles there are the articles and the ticklish matter of the commas. . . . And then, in a voice rougher than ever he shouts, without understanding in the least the Latin saying: *Abisus abisum*. . . .

"I thought it proper to have a talk with General Ronderos. I found him at the ministry, nervous, not communicative, and

I saw his good faith, his love for his country thus repaid. He fingered his mustache, silently. Then he had Dr. Alcón called in, who entered livid. 'Doctor Alcón,' he asked him, showing him a copy of *La Integridad*, 'are these your articles?' 'No, General, they are not mine,' replied the other drily. 'They're not yours?' And here Ronderos drew from the pocket of his coat a roll of manuscript. 'They're not yours? See here the original of your letter.' (Gacharnah had sent them.) Alcón, caught, backs out, glances behind him, and leans back against a table. And Ronderos, slapping his face with the papers, upbraids him for his falsehoods and his treachery. He points out that Alcón belongs at the same time to the Government and to the opposition . . . 'but I leave that to the reader's consideration,' as Doña Aura would say under similar circumstances. The thoughts and the words struck against the bald head of Alcón like hail. It was a tempest above a cranium. 'You,' he continued with that military brusqueness we know of, 'you, who were of the opposition, I bring here, name you my assistant so that you should see for yourself, hour for hour, that nothing underhanded or unworthy is going on here. You yourself formulated, altered, one by one, the paragraphs of this contract, . . . and now, without your signature, you speak of hidden tricks and of the intricate points of the commas. . . . I have looked for the enemies in front, in the encampments. . . . I prefer frank and outspoken adversaries, like Polanco, like Cardoso, whom I have fought in open battle. . . . But this, . . . but this . . . you are an enemy in the rear, who fights from ambush, a contemptible slanderer . . . a hawk . . . a treacherous bird of prey. From anybody else I should demand resignation, but you I simply remove because of an indignity.' Alcón left the room as green as an erotic poem by S. C. Mata.

"That night, according to what González Mogollón reported,— he who reports everything — there was held a great meeting at the office of *La Integridad*. The General Staff of the Integrist party congratulated Alcón and told him that this occurrence had made him the man of the hour. Indeed they wired everywhere detailing the facts. Alcón became in articles and telegrams 'the immolated victim,' the 'man of the day,' and one meeting, containing an 'integrista' majority, elected

him senator. On the other hand, a second meeting has nominated you for pater conscriptus. You will have Alcón in the curulean chair adjoining, and myself on the other side.

"To come: the benefit of Signora Rondinelli will take place soon, with *Aida*. Inside of two weeks there will be races. You are nominated judge at the race-tracks. Mata, the divine singer, has just published a volume of verses. By the next post, or by a reliable person, I'll 'not' send you this volume, which is entitled '*Alder Trees and Stones*.'

"Greetings for Bellegarde. Tell him that I shall soon be with him. I believe that sea level agrees better with me than the climate in these high altitudes. Sebastian charges me to write you a text of good augury which might serve as a counterweight, now that peace seems certain, in lieu of the one that was cited in the midst of anxieties caused by political agitation, on the first of January at the house of Aunt Teresa: 'I shall water the seed of peace, and then the earth will give its fruits, the vine its grapes, and Heaven its dew.'"

Alejandro and Bellegarde thus read, seated in the cabin of the steamer, this interesting letter, by the light of the lamp around which the wings of insects, butterflies, beetles of peculiar form, produced a continual buzzing and humming.

The night was serene. Bellegarde wanted to go down several leagues in order to prepare early in the morning some particular pieces of labor along the dam. They lighted the ship's lantern, which threw shafts of brilliant light upon the river, and the steamer began to slip away, brushing some groups of trees between whose leaves were dancing innumerable fireflies. On the shores bunches of alligators were forming which, at the approach of the vessel, avoided it, grunting and plunging into the water.

Suddenly the steamer turned. It stopped a moment; the wheel moved quite slowly. A negro sprang into the water, swam with the rope between his teeth; arrived at the shore, and climbing briskly up the bank, he tied the rope around a tree trunk. The vessel brushed against the side of a high rock which dominated the opening of the spit of land. Then she emitted dense clouds of steam, and the engine stopped its labor. The crew were on deck, and were trying to sleep lulled

by the rushing water of the current and the murmuring of the immense tropical wilds.

The two friends, harassed by the excessive heat, were unable to find rest, and continued conversing and reading their periodicals until the middle of the night.

A noise on the roof of their cabin, above the deck, made them interrupt their reading. A body which struck with great force, and soft pads of feet stopping now and then, but always renewed, though with great caution, just like the steps of a thief who deadens his footfalls; and then, tumult, clamor, scratchings, something which clung to the metal edge of the skylight, caused them disquiet. Bellegarde, in dismay, hurriedly seized the deck lamp, and both gently went up the stairs leading to the deck. The light of the lamp was thrown in spots on the trees, and painted dancing shadows on their foliage. They crossed the deck in the direction of the poop, and held their lantern high. And then only they espied a big bulk, eyes which glowed like red-hot coal, a hide which reflected a yellowish sheen, . . . it was a tiger, growling and holding on to a big chunk of meat; that moment it had reached the edge of the deck, measured for an instant the intervening distance, crouched and then with a mighty leap reached the bank of the river, disappearing in the darkness.

"Ah, my dear Count," said Alejandro, while the big outlines of the beast became visible again at the border of the forest, "that is our mission: put the tigers to flight . . . frighten barbarism away, encouraged by the words of a text which Sebastian sent us: 'I shall scatter the seed of peace, . . . and then the earth will yield her fruits.'"

## CHAPTER XXII

S. C. MATA

ENTERING her box Dolores, disengaging herself from her silk mantle, blinked, her eyes dazzled by the wave of brilliant light that poured from the ceiling and inundated the whole theater, reflected from the pillars and caryatids.

It was the benefit night of la Rondinelli, and *Aïda* was being performed.

Montellano, who had been accustomed to retire at eight sharp, had never taken Dolores to the theater before his marriage with Doña Aura. But now, urged on by the poetess, he went from time to time in order to accompany with his yawns the terrific rumblings of the bass viol, and the passionate notes of the tenor and the primadonna.

Installed in her seat Dolores, somewhat confused and feeling her heart beat with a mixture of happiness and anxiety, picked up her opera glass and passed in review the body of the house where the shining baldheads were in the majority. Then she directed her attention towards the row of boxes and saw filing past her lenses those erect busts, those heads which bowed, those meaningless motions and gestures, mouths which smiled to neighbors that did not come within the radius of the glasses, the movement, the agitation of this assemblage of people, amidst the gleam of mother of pearl, the flashings of diamonds, the scintillating of bracelets.

Suddenly she perceived Inés, with her jessamine pallor, with her statuesque neck that supported a head like a Greek model. That face became animated for a moment, and the eyes lost their sleepy languor. Dolores sought with eagerness, with misgivings, the companion of Inés, and with unspeakable bliss saw appear in the lens the steely eyes and virile physiognomy of Bellegarde. And Roberto? She scanned carefully the boxes in the front rows, which were still unoccupied, let the glass travel along them, and a sweet emotion swept over her when there at last she discovered the pallid face of Doña Ana, and with her, Roberto. Then she turned her head in the direction of the stage.

She saw the royal palace at Memphis. To right and left immense colonnades, and the statues of the gods: Keth, the divine cat; Ra, the great god of the kingdom; Patch, with her lion's head; Apis, the bull-god, the most sacred of all brutes. In the background, behind huge Egyptian porticos, the desert, the pyramids, the Sphinx.

Amneris and Rhadames have begun the duet of apprehension, of palpitating ardor; *Aïda* advances and the duet becomes a trio. The orchestra continues the same theme, but

interlacing with it are the notes of Aida, notes which are prolonged like heavy sighs that yet reveal ardor, and her profound yet resigned love. And Dolores, without wanting to, felt these notes painfully reverberate in her breast, treasuring the knowledge that she herself, who knew this love, should be able to give to the melody the accent, the intention that Verdi had put into it.

There came the aria of the first act, which la Rondinelli interpreted superbly, enthusing the audience: the tremendous struggle, the frightful conflict decided in the breast of Aida between love and patriotism, that aria in which the musical phrase follows and shows the successive grades of thought, a perfect expression of the musical drama in which the first of the modern masters has contrived to wed word and melody. The electric button sounded shrilly, and there entered Mata, with hair disheveled and with eyes glittering hotly.

"Have you seen, Señorita?" he exclaimed with his asthmatic voice, and rolling his bloodshot eyes. "This is my creation, my dream, my homesickness. Only the souls of highest flight can understand us. Perhaps you do not fathom me; I will explain to you. But Verdi and I, we understand each other. Here are my verses:

"I want my lyre to give forth my song,  
In unison with the mute sphinx which gazes,  
And in the hot desert which mirrors a white dream,  
I would be the eternal bridegroom of the sphinx.

"Señorita, see you not the desert, the Sphinx, the gods? Ah, genius! Oh, Verdi! My brother, . . . brother of my soul!"

Mata was the prey of an extraordinary exaltation. His attenuated limbs trembled with a feverish convulsion. In his eyes, where the frenzy of madness raved, there were tears.

"No, there is nobody here to understand me," he continued in a cavernous voice, and he went on declaiming:

"In lieu of Cross and Latin phrases I want grand  
Emblems on my tombstone, with letters hieroglyphic;

"In lieu of a requiescat in Gothic characters,  
I want those suggestive demotic signs."

And as though oppressed by a paroxysm of enthusiasm,



by the exuberance of genius, he fainted, let his head drop on his breast.

Alcón, with his light overcoat over his arm, dressed elegantly, went out to the vestibule, climbed the flight of stairs, and noted with satisfaction in passing, that several groups were whispering, speaking of his resignation, of his grand character, exchanging smiles, greetings, handshakes. He was lost in one of the corridors. He went over to where the locked doors of the boxes were, looking for the number 18, and while he thus went on past the numbers 10, 12, 14, 16, he felt a touch of gratification upon appearing again before Dolores, not as the unknown assistant secretary, but as the audacious man of the opposition who is admired by coteries, whom the enemies of Ronderos applaud, whom all the newspapers are babbling about. Ah, and besides: senator, senator for the Department of Aguirre, where the Assembly with its opposition majority has at last recognized his name, the name of an "immolated victim," of a martyred patriot, to launch it anew, like a challenge, in the face of the Government. And thus, surrounded as he was by that aureole of a martyr, a patriot, of a looming man of the opposition, doubtless Dolores would . . .

"Number 18 . . . here it is." He pressed the button, driven to this by a habit acquired during his period of servitude, when he opened the door of the ministry with apprehension on hearing the little bell of Ronderos, and he was, in fact, on the point of saying "*Señor Minister*," as he put his head in the box.

"Ah, my dear Alcón," thundered Montellano inside. "Come in. We shall somehow manage to find a seat for you. I am somewhat upset by the state of mind in which Mata has just now left us."

He had really taken Mata by the arm, had made him rise, and he now made room for Alcón. His bald head shone like an aureole, for it was like a flame. His false smile suffused his face, his hawk-like eyes were opened wide, and flashed from under their lids. He saw that from below in the theater several opera glasses were raised to contemplate him, and he therefore moved his seat quite in front. He no longer sought the shade, as he had on the night of *Werther*, but rather the

full light, the apotheosis. He bent down to the ear of Dolores.

"For you always the same," he murmured. "Hm. Hm," he grunted. "The same for me is a matter which another. . . . Always your devoted."

In the foyer had been prepared a theatrical *coup*. Landáburo with several other friends was whispering in a corner, observing his entrance. Alcón presented himself with his overcoat on his arm, directed his vacillating, shortsighted glance to every part of the house, and at last met the eye of Landáburo. Then he came forward. Mutual exclamations of pleasure, of surprise. "Doctor!" "General!" The two politicians met in the very middle of the parlor adjoining the foyer, and rushed towards each other, with open arms, whereupon they embraced with a show of frenzy.

"Doctor Alcón, in the name of the Revaluation Party I congratulate you that you do not follow the politics of the closed door."

"General Landáburo, in the name of the group of Immaculates I salute in you the champion of Liberty."

Thus these two.

Those standing near became strangely affected. At first a mute agitation set in. Then voices were heard. These were dominated by the gruff organ of González Mogollón, who went from group to group, shouting:

"Fine. This is very touching. It is a league of men who count. We have peace for twenty years. . . . With the concessions and kisses there is, there must be an end of the old injustice. . . . Look at my tears. . . . I am moved. . . ."

And in the foyer, attracted by all this hubbub, there came constantly from elsewhere a stream of people: men of the opposition, neutral persons, curious persons merely, and all of them, exciting each other more and more each instant, infecting each other under the influence of this enthusiasm, of this hatred; and there began first a murmur which grew and grew, grew like an avalanche, then turned into cries and shouts of applause, into ebullitions of indignation, of banter, of menace:

"Bravo! . . . Three cheers for Alcón! . . . Three cheers

for Landáburo! . . . Down with Ronderos! . . . Death to him!"

Landáburo whispered within the hearing of his friends:

"Day after to-morrow, let every one, without fail, appear at the bar of the senate . . . afterwards a great meeting . . . let us get busy!"

On the stage it is the triumph of Rhadames. One sees the royal throne. The great crowd is running about like ants. In the rear is visible the street, in gala attire, ready to receive the hero. The orchestra strikes up the tune of a march, wherein the flutes and the other soft instruments are stilled, and strident fanfares are heard. Trumpets and horns blare a tune, simple and almost monotonous, with three notes dominating in the rhythm full of Oriental fire, like a battle cry of implacable furor, and the victorious army advances in broad defile.

The trumpets pass into a new stirring tune, in which the stamping and martial confusion of heralds are mingled, slaves in groups, Nubians and Ethiopians come on, their ebony arms weighed down by chains. A throng of Egyptian servants, their arms dyed red, girt with wreaths, are there. New trumpets, and the three clamorous notes still piercing the air like an implacable shout of combat. Filing across the scene are hosts of warriors, laden with warlike booty, trophies, heaps of naked swords and burnished shields which glitter in the glaring sun of the Orient. High up the mystical standards, papyrus scrolls covered with hieroglyphics. More trumpets, with the march tune of three notes again urging the folk with their rude rhythm. There come processions of priests, of scribes, with long beard, erect head, majestic in their carriage, in their emblematic and ceremonious gestures. And yet the pitiless three notes are crying out for war, for bloodshed, each time one note higher.

Rocking above the enormous throng appear, escorted by warriors, the idols, upon the shoulders of priests, carried on biers covered with silk.

Roberto had, after much persistence, been induced to accompany his mother to the theater. Her pallor, her gray hair, contrasted strongly with the red background. To see Roberto recovered, cheerful, and happy; to think that their fortune was no longer in danger, and to recall those evening strolls in *El*

*Sauzal* when the future of Roberto and Inés seemed definitely fixed, had diminished the expression of sadness and pain which had impressed itself so strongly upon the old lady's features. Sometimes even a flash of cheerfulness, a smile spread a tint of pink over the pallid forehead. And on this particular night, enlivened by the music, by those currents of pleasure and enthusiasm which ran through the numerous audience, she had broken her habitual silence, had become talkative, and somewhat animated.

"I understand no other music than the Italian," she was saying to Bellegarde. "When I saw my first opera, on coming to Bogotá, nothing else was sung but *Norma*, *Lucia*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, and my admiration, my affection have remained attached to that music. It recalls to me the only happy period of my life, and whenever I hear those selections, those melodies, I seem to be living once more in the past, which brings to life a dead world, and I feel young, I see everything rose color, and I think that, after all, life is a story which ends well."

"But, mother," rejoined Roberto, enchanted and relieved to see her thus, her troubles forgotten, taking up these subjects of art and music, contemplating that smile on his mother's lips which a short while ago seemed to have forever fled. "But, mother, you do not know Wagner, nor that suggestive orchestral music which is the decoration, that landscape which unrolls the scenes, those passions which sing in the human voice."

"My son, I am already too old to understand these matters. I do not comprehend how one can possibly translate rocks, plains, the day, the night, solitude into chords, symphonies."

"Why not? Listen now, for instance, dearest mother, do you hear this embalmed silence which floats above the dreams of *Aida*, this tremolo of the flutes that makes you think of solitude and peace?"

"But since I do not see it, neither do I feel it. And since this is so I do not believe that Wagner has invented anything which Verdi has not equally expressed. Verdi I do understand. If you only knew," she went on, casting a glance at both Alejandro and Belegarde who were listening to her, "if you

only knew how much in my time we used to weep with Traviata. . . . How is it that Wagner has never made anybody weep like that?"

The door was opened and Mata appeared.

"My lady, Roberto, dear Count," he said. "Did you see that triumphal scene? And the gods? And Egypt? Did you hear, did you understand this moonlight scene in C major? That grandiose sentiment, the impetus of death, the repose in the reunion of these ancient Egyptian gods, . . . that was what inflamed my genius, it was that which grand old Verdi has represented in his opera. . . . Oh, the Egyptian homesickness! Break the lyre, die jointly with the Sphinx!

"Ra veils there my dream, Ra the great god of the dominion,  
That sleep of the mummy, of which Pliny tells us.

"And Keth, the divine cat, accompanies me also,  
With her eyes of phosphorus and her demure smile.

"And cover me with shadow and the imperial idea  
Of Patch, who with her leonine head grins,  
And with the ox-like Apis, the most sacred of boutes. . . ."

"Thou art," said Roberto, "he who has eyes of phosphorus, and who grins,—the most sacred of brutes."

"Nobody understands me! Nobody understands me!" exclaimed Mata, and like a breath, with extravagant gestures, he left the box.

The act was over.

In the midst of scenery, surrounded by a great tumult, priests, soldiers, slaves were gathering in a corner the heathen gods that had done duty at the triumph of Rhadames. There remained the ox, Apis, right below the goddess Osiris. Patch and Ra had been sunk to the regions below, together with stacks of lotus flowers and ears of corn. Keth, the divine cat, could be discovered amongst monoliths inscribed with demotic characters. As the last of all there advanced across the wooden floor the Sphinx, which then was placed together with the gods in the dark nook where nobody cared about them.

The high priests were smoking. The Ethiopian slaves were emptying glasses of beer. The prisoners of war, with paste-

board chains, were using improper language in Italian. In the half-light, among a combination of noises, hammer blows, thumping, chatter, commanding voices and the distant uproar of the spectators, the stage hands, sweating, are coming, going, shouting, hoisting with ropes pieces of linen or gauze, and Egyptian columns.

The last act begins. The bell sounds. The first notes of the orchestra are heard. Everybody returns to his seat. They are awaiting with eagerness the moment when la Rondinelli will appear again. The change of scenery takes place. The temple is shown enwrapped in a light which, coming down from a mysterious height, falls upon the idol in the rear, bathes its head and shoulders, and diminishes at last, being finally extinguished in a bluish semi-obscurity, at the foot of the columns which hide between the shadows of the crypt. Choruses of high priests and of priestesses, moving in union intone before the idol a primitive and monotonous chant, resembling a lullaby before a cradle.

Then Rhadames appears. He is going to die, already sentenced, entombed in the crypt. The warrior descends to the cavern. He moves the stone. Rhadames remains buried. A tragic clash with the cymbals, which falls and loses itself in the profundities of the orchestra, as though it descended into the darkness of the crypt. Then, a silence of fear, and one feels Death passing.

During an intermission, like an echo of profound pain, like an accent of irrevocable mourning, the violins in the middle range played the prelude to the theme:

*O, terra, addio!* (Oh Earth, farewell!)

The lament spreads, rises to the temple, and dies at the feet of the indifferent gods.

Up on high, in the light, the assembly chants the religious lullaby. Down in the depths, in the shadows, Rhadames is sobbing: "*Addio, o valle di pianto.*" . . . (Farewell, O vale of tears.)

Mata had applied another injection to himself. Those mummy arms of his, "of which Pliny has told us," showed several ulcers already. But he required at this moment all his courage, for he meant to confess his passion to la Rondinelli. As the act had already finished, she was in her tiny dressing-

room, awaiting her call for the stage. She was alone, seated near the bell. Her massive golden braids hung that night over face and shoulders touched up with black and brown, and her arms, too, were of a dusky hue, as well as neck, and face, so that the whites of her eyes contrasted strangely. Her ordinarily expressionless glance, the humid and vague glance of a cow, had at this instant, thanks to this contrast, an expression, a brilliancy which were quite startling. She was trying before her looking-glass that gaze full of intense affection which she meant to bestow on her lover as she entered the crypt. Mata, in his madness, thought that this glance was meant for him, clutched the soles of her feet, and seized her hand.

"Pearl of Italy," he exclaimed in heart-rending accents, "I love you!"

"But *I* do not love *you*," said la Rondinelli, with a burst of laughter. And then, seeing he did not let go of her hand, but on the contrary covered it with kisses, she rose with a supercilious look, her expression changed to veritable rage, and with accent and gesture in which the ideal woman had entirely disappeared, and the daughter of kings had become an ordinary woman of the gutter, the woman from the purlieu of Venice, she exclaimed:

"*Via di qua!* Get out of here!"

And just then the call boy appeared to warn her that the time had come to make her entrance on the stage.

Rhadames, buried alive, awaited her in the crypt. She, again with composed features, had assumed an expression of sweetness, of resignation, of infinite affection, as she made her way through the wings.

Just one moment later, at the same point where Aida had entered, an arm began to show, and then a sharp detonation was heard.

"What has broken? . . . What instrument has burst? . . . What fell on the scenery?" . . .

Such were the questions asked by the audience. Some turned their heads or searched the stage with their eyes. Nothing. . . . And they turned once more absorbed to the final picture, to the entrancing music.

The opera finished serenely, in full peace. Up above, in

the full light of the temple, the religious ceremonies went on imperturbably. Below, in the asphyxiating crypt, two human beings were dying.

"My dear mother," said Roberto, addressing Doña Ana, who was entranced by the music, "that duet is not a dialogue, but an exchange of souls. . . . What economy and yet what wealth! Wagner never accomplished similar effects with means so simple. Here the orchestra is neither the slave nor the tyrant of the singer. It is what ought to be: his ally, his friend, his sister."

There swept overhead through the wide space, like wounded birds, reminiscences of the ancient songs of love and glory. In the temple there continued those monotonous chants,—a somnolent monorhythm. In the depths the two lovers perished slowly from lack of air. The music keeps on in its quaking, trembling measure, full of dolorous effect, and those two tunes, the religious cradle song up above, and the death hymn in the sepulcher, are floating on and mingling, are dying away in the profundities of the crypt.

Addio, oh terra;  
Addio, oh valle di pianto.

Mata had believed that by committing suicide on the stage, by this last *addio*, he would reach the sublime, the paroxysm of the tragic. He thought that all the spectators would throw themselves at his feet, pleading, sorrowing, waving their hats, calling for help, offering him the tribute of their tears. He had fancied that Inés would feel dismay in her box, while Dolores would be sobbing aloud, and that la Rondinelli, Rhadames, the high priests, the by-standers, forming a medley of different epochs and garments, would crowd around those bleeding remains of his, exclaiming, with amazement, anxiety, and admiration, "Yes, it is Mata, . . . it is Mata the Divine . . . his genius has been his death. . . ."

But instead of falling towards the right, towards the light, in full view of the audience, he fell towards the left, in the semi-obscurity of a narrow, unlighted passage, amid the scenery. A scene shifter, being on the point of removing some piece, thought that he had stumbled against some drunken fellow, seized him by the feet, and without paying attention to the



scarlet drops he left behind in his track, shoved him into a dark corner, between the trumpets, the tinsel and the gods of the show. The opera over, he left the theater vacant. A darkish streamlet which filtered through the wings, the thin rays of light that illuminated but dimly the pieces of scenery showing the Nile, the desert, the Sphinx, was all that was left. The Ox-God, Apis, the goddess Keth tricked out in corn spikes, Patch with her catlike smile, they had between them a rigid body, clutching hands, a still, pale face, a thin line of blood which dripped from the shattered skull to the breast, a mouth that was twisted into a grin of silent reproach, and an eye that had been torn by the bullet from its socket and hung down the greenish cheeks. . . .

Mata, the godlike, the incomprehensible and misunderstood genius, thus concluded his longing for things Egyptian, and slept his last sleep close to the mute Sphinx.

They shall not put me within four rectangular boards,  
Such as they put Christians in in their straight tombs;

Ra watches here over my sleep; Ra, the great god of dominion,  
That long mummy sleep whereof Pliny tells us.

And me also accompanies Keth, divinest of cats  
With her lambent eyes and demure smile.

I want my song to break my lyre,  
Joined to the mute Sphinx that gazes . . . gazes . . . gazes . . .

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ALONDRA

CARRIAGE after carriage, their doors shining, fur skins spread over their boxes, were rolling along the highroad that led to the race-track. The ribbons of the ladies fluttered and shone, and their pretty dresses hung over the open doors of the vehicles. In the rays of the cheerful July sun the satins and silks were resplendent, steeped in colors that looked as though set aflame with brightness. Parties of horsemen having made

the pavement lively with the hoofbeats of their steeds, now turned into the wide avenue. The tramways were crowded with people of every walk of life. Wrapped in clouds of dust gilt by the sunlight, amidst a perfect shower of ringing bells, the rattle of harness, the creaking of thin boards, gay, noisy, with bursts of laughter, there came advancing afoot a mighty wave of people which seemed like an ant heap, which pushed and spread in an overabundance of life and merriment.

Amongst a group of horsemen came Landáburo, erect, solemn, magnificent, certain that the multitude kept their glances fastened upon him, and approaching one of his intimates, he said:

“We have made a mistake. We ought not to lose an opportunity to stir the imagination of the masses. One must keep the throng under the charm of admiration. It is absolutely necessary that one of us run a race to-day, that some one of our party win the race of honor. I have been looking for one who would better be able to score that success and triumph. But I think I can do it. Let the multitude become convinced that I can with equal facility, with equal dash, wield the sword, the pen, the jockey whip. The Greeks and the Romans did not disdain these games. . . . Yes, it is necessary that I at all risks try my luck with El Condor, the horse which lately has won nearly all races. And if I only can win with him, our success is certain. It will be well to take proper steps that there is afterwards, among the friends of the people, an ovation, a great ovation.”

And lowering his voice, he added in a tone of mystery:

“Friends, some day we shall show ourselves in different guise, below triumphal arches, with the people at our feet, and holding the hearts and the admiring looks of fair ladies.”

The clatter of wheels and the roar of men and horses deadened his words, and they reached only the ears of his intimate friends.

In front there extended, as far as eye could reach, a file of coaches and light carriages, on which the whips and hats of the drivers were clearly perceptible. The drivers were decked out in sashes of gay colors, amidst a big veil of dust that the sun rendered luminous. There, in a handsome victoria, with their peculiar mark of distinction, were Doña Ana and Doña

- Teresa, quite in black. And at their side, Inés, who wore a dress of purple cloth, entirely without adornment of any kind, but which in its extreme simplicity served to emphasize the elegance of her figure. Before them, Roberto and Alejandro, in a coach to which a team of spirited sorrel horses was harnessed.

"*Mon cher,*" said Alejandro to Roberto, while shortening the reins, "I rejoice in my soul that you have presented Alondra to Bellegarde, so that you could not be tempted to drive her yourself."

"My mother was so worried by the idea that a race might harm me, and she is so overjoyed that my health is mending. . . ."

"And besides," rejoined Alejandro, with a roguish smile, "it would not seem proper that a senator of the Republic should occupy the curulean chair and the striped jacket of the jockey at the same time."

"True, I am entered neither for those trotting matches nor for the races."

Near them just then passed Bellegarde at a short gallop on Alondra. To see the handsome mare so full of fire, so slender, with her eye so bright, her ears quivering, with her haunches so strong and those legs of steel, gave him a momentary shock.

"I have not made much of a sacrifice," remarked Roberto, however, "in keeping myself quiet to-day, and Alondra will probably suffer more than I!"

Suddenly there was a tumult. The coaches halted. The dog-cart in which Gacharnah sat, trying to pass, was jamming into other vehicles; the wheels were violently flung against other wheels, and the cart upset. The horse became entangled in the reins, broke the pole, and rushed on, pulling along the traces. And in the confusion that followed the dandy arose, pale and covered with dust, and accepted a seat in Alejandro's vehicle.

"Nothing!"

The multitude on foot, the coaches, the horses, all now invaded the race grounds. The carriages began to form an immense half-circle. The huge stand and the boxes became brilliant with the display of dresses and sunshades in bright colors. Laughter, shouts of the bettors, clatter of stirrups, neighing of horses, and, over all this, the deafening voice of González

Mogollón, who ordered, directed, went up and went down, applauded, all in his capacity of manager of the fiesta, according to the laconic statement on the ribbon which had been fastened in the lapel of his walking coat, and which read:

“President of the Organization Committee of the Races for the Benefit of the Teaching Hospital.”

As he crossed the huge crowd, on his black mare Bellegarde occasioned a murmur of approval. The people with their un-failing instinct greeted in him the man full of audacity and generosity who devoted his millions to the benefit of the country, to advance the progress of Colombia. Before his acts suspicions had fled, the echoes of slander had been stilled, and all at this moment retained in their memory only the marvels of his energy, the blessings which everybody, rich and poor, had begun to enjoy, and which, when his great work was concluded, they would enjoy still more.

“For my taste,” said Alejandro to Roberto, “the best about a holiday like to-day is the rejoicing going on all about, the total lack of cares and worry which I read in the faces that surround us. In them one may read the contentment of yesterday, the security of to-morrow. It is the *joie de vivre*. People who have to lie awake nights thinking of the means wherewith to satisfy their necessities or their luxuries do not wear such a look. This is the cheerfulness of peace. . . . How is Sebastian getting along with his Latin jargon?”

“I shall sow peace,” replied Roberto, while he climbed up to their box and kept his gaze fixed on the track, “and later, the earth will give its fruits, the vine its grapes, and heaven its dew.”

A trumpet call. The horses are led into the field, range themselves, and start on a run. The field is alive with clamor. Shouts of the betting crowd, protests, applause for the jockeys proving themselves the most clever and expert. The horses dwindle away, are now lost to view in the distance. They run on, they grow in size, and again the field resounds with excited shouts. Presently the anxious gestures of the lads are to be seen, and towards the finish Petronio forges ahead, arrives at the stake, runs on as far as the grand stand, and cries of triumph or of displeasure are heard.

The jockey who has won, a little fellow of but fourteen,

sitting bareback on Petronio, owned by Alejandro, allows the horse to run a little ahead, then checks him gradually, and returns at a trot to calm him down in front of the stand. Landáburo, having lost \$500, threatens one of the losing jockeys, raises his arms, gabbles nonsense, declaims against one of the judges, says that his jockey has been bought, and then ascends to the box where Alejandro is, amidst a flutter of ladies.

"Alejandro," he says, and his voice trembles with the wrath of defeat, "here you have your five hundred pesos that you've won of me. I hope they will do you good."

Without either answering or looking at Landáburo, Alejandro called to the little fellow who came to the foot of the stand, his cap shoved back and his black eyes rolling in his head like balls of jet, thoroughly affrighted.

"Look here Perucho, General Landáburo makes you a present of these reales."

Montellano's victoria appeared. Roberto hastened to welcome Dolores. He felt secret remorse, and he sought to efface his guilt by an effusion of civilities and attentions. But Dolores was reserved and cold. Roberto smiled slyly, observing the effort on Lola's part to hide the joy which flashed from her glance.

She had had a white dress made for herself like that which Inés wore the day of the wedding, and Roberto, throwing a glance at both the garment and the frown, said in a low voice, while he took her to a seat near Inés:

"To-day you are all brightness in your costume, and all darkness in hair and eyes."

Montellano's daughter at once became more cheerful. She laughed frankly and heartily, so much so that Roberto's cousin, usually indifferent, saluted her affectionately.

The elegant sporting men who passed continually up and down before the grand stand, exchanging smiles with occupants of the seats, were always wondering at the contrast between these two styles of beauty: the dreamy eyes and the vagrant, roguish eyes, the thoughtful forehead of the jessamine-hued lady and the pinkish and playful Brunette. But while Roberto, with perfect equity, with a balanced fitness, was dividing his gallantry and his coquetry alike between those two, the sound

of the trumpet was heard, announcing the start of the second race: a silver cup was the prize. The horses came up to form in line, snorting and neighing, and were placed in front.

Gacharnah, in the center of the track, seized the white flag, had the horses form a straight line, cheered up the jockeys, observed closely, bent down examining, advanced, retraced his steps, with the demeanor of one who directs a serious combat:

“One! Two! Three!”

He stood up straight, and the white flag dropped. The horses shot ahead.

And again the earth shook. The multitude of those on foot who took up the center of the circle, spread, scattered, lengthened out, following with enthusiasm the turns of the race. Some of them climbed up to the empty seats on the carriages. Betting phrases were bandied about. One sorrel horse shot ahead. The silence of nervous expectation reigned. Suddenly the cry:

“Rayo wins.”

During this space of time, in front of the stand, vendors with baskets of apples and oranges passed up and down.

“The earth will give its fruits,” said Roberto jestingly to Inés. “Do you remember that afternoon?”

Doña Aura had them buy some apples for her. But biting into one she felt with dismay one of her teeth break.

“It is not ripe,” she exclaimed with displeasure, and threw the apple away.

“But what surely is ripe is the tooth,” murmured Roberto, who was beside Inés and Dolores.

A dense mist that came pouring down from the foot of the range of mountains, suddenly, with a puff of wind, enwrapped the scene, spread over the whole field, made the parasols bob up and down, whipped the faces, moistened the roofs of the coaches, and obscured the white of the ladies' cloaks, of the gowns, of the gloves, and darkened all those brilliant colors with the gray gusts of wind which crossed each other like handfuls of ashes. The squall broke the black clouds in spots, and the blue of the sky smiled down between the light apertures on the horizon, while within a few moments the heat of the

sun removed the wet from the harness of the horses, from the dancing leaves that had been torn from the trees and were whirling around in a circle.

"The sky will give its dew," said Roberto humorously to Alejandro, when the rain came.

But the shower passed quickly. All these juvenile faces which had begun to purse their lips in a frown of fitful peevishness, now smiled again. The whole landscape once more shone with moist freshness.

Cheerfulness increases. It is reflected from all the faces. The sun of late afternoon gilds the grass. It mirrors itself in the polished coach doors. It glitters from the burnished metal of the harness. It shines from the plumes and feathers of the ladies' hats in the boxes, from the lenses of the field glasses, from the branches and bouquets of flowers, from the ribbons of the bonnets, even from the roses in the cheeks made brilliant by recent emotions and by libations of champagne that when raised reflect the bubbling and effervescing fluid with opalescent fire.

"What are we going to wager, Dolores? The next race is due."

"Roberto, let us bet something," comes the voice of Doña Aura.

"A gold pen which you will give me, against *The Elm Tree and the Ivy* which is about to see the light."

"Done."

Dolores was unable to hide her pleasure when Roberto approached her, and as she smiled frankly she showed a row of magnificent teeth.

"That which you yourself may indicate, Roberto. Propose something."

"Flowers against perfumes."

"Good, flowers against perfumes. And you, what do you give, perfumes or flowers?"

"Perfumes: against that red camellia which you have there."

"This camellia? . . . No, . . . you yourself gave me that. I will not risk it."

"Well, then, that rose."

"And it is from Castile, you know."

"Agreed. . . . But which is your horse?"

"Tell me yours first. . . . Wait."

And she let her glance wander along the row of horses in order to choose amongst those that were trotting on the track, near the point of starting.

"Mine," said Dolores, "is that white horse over there, with the jockey in a red-and-blue striped jacket."

"And mine is Hamlet, that black horse yonder," rejoined Roberto, and he turned towards Inés.

"Already picked your horse, Inés? I come about that bet."

With a slight smile of mystery, the dark meaning of which an initiated person like Roberto might divine, she answered:

"I like that brown and rather insignificant looking horse, with the jockey in gray."

"It is a poor horse, let me advise you."

"I don't care; I am fond of those colors."

"You always prefer the indefinable, the colors between, don't you?"

"Do you think so?" said she, with a discreet smile. "That explains to me why you envy me this white camellia."

"For you, then, white camellia, German sonatas, verses by Sully-Prudhomme, jockeys in gray, misty landscapes by Corot, and dresses in plain purple, such as you wear to-day."

"Look, Roberto, the horses are on the point of starting. Which is the one you choose? I want to see your taste. Some caprice, I presume."

"Which do you think?"

"That black one?"

"Exactly. Anything queer about that?"

"But see, Roberto, they are already starting, and we have not yet settled our bet. . . ."

"Very well, that white camellia, then?"

"No, not the white camellia. . . ."

"Well, then?" . . .

"All right, the camellia, but painted in oil. . . ."

"Splendid, but beside the painting, that branch of Alpine violets. . . . And I will bet. . . . Perhaps the score of *Aida*?"

Without moving her lips she said "yes" with her eyes, half-closing her eyelids with that languor peculiar to her.

"And in your case, mother dear," said Roberto, taking Doña



Ana's hand, "I bet a kiss, and I'll pay you in advance." And he imprinted a kiss on her black glove.

The three horses, the white one, the black and the brown, which had disappeared in a dust cloud, now reappeared, speeded along, followed the bend in the track. Then they were lost for a brief while amongst the brambly fields, began to appear again, and were keeping the same line, without any one of them being able to gain the slightest advantage over the others.

There arose a great shout from all those throats:

"The white one! . . . he is gaining!"

"They're already on the return trip!"

Dolores blushed with emotion, and laughed with pleasure.

There was another shout:

"The brown horse! . . . El Tordo is winning!" . . .

Inés took her glass to look.

Now they are coming. And the multitude suddenly exclaims:

"The black one! The black one! . . . Fine! Well done! . . . He has passed. . . . Three cheers for Hamlet!"

Then followed two races in which González Mogollón awarded a jockey in bronze and a harness trimmed with gold, "the González Mogollón harness," as it was termed in the program, to the winners.

Everybody was impatiently awaiting the Honor Race, in which gentlemen were to participate.

The sun, now declining, threw wide shadows over the vast plain, anointed with brushfuls of old gold the tops of the trees, the upper rows of the grand stand. In the glass of the coach lamps the light of the sun was thrown back like living flame.

A new roll of the drum. This was followed by the gay strains of the military bands, and after a short silence a bell was heard announcing the race: a trumpet call.

The Honor Race!

All hearts are beating with emotion. Among the gentlemen there is much excitement, and plenty of movement up on the stand and in the coaches. The ladies are assuming more attentive attitudes so as to see better. Several put their field glasses ready for use.

The horses that are to figure in this race begin to appear

on the track, with short leaps, animated by the music. The grooms have no light task in leading them by the bridle. The gentlemen riders are mounting amidst handclapping, cheers and voices of encouragement that are heard from the stand.

There is now El Buitre on the track, a chestnut Arab, capricious, imperious, hard to control. He wishes to start, shaking his head, lifting his neck with impatience on being checked with the bridle, and in the struggle that follows between rider and horse the arms of the latter are violently jerked.

Next comes El Huascar, a light silver gray, with sunken flanks, shoulder bones protruding. In his excitement he moves the stump of his tail convulsively.

Now enters El Inca at a short trot, throwing his feet high. He is hard to hold, but continually bites his bridle sidewise, steps obliquely, and shows a great mind to throw himself against the posts on the track.

"El Condor! El Condor!" a number are shouting when they see enter with admirable grace, with muscles of steel, with well-defined marks on his gray hide, a trotting-horse that paws the ground and is full of vigor. A man on foot is leading him slowly, while this swift, swan-like steed, fiery, presses onward, turning restlessly around the arm which subdues him with some trouble.

But the superb animal is without a rider, although the preceding horses are already trotting ahead fully equipped for the track.

"Who is going to race the Condor?" all are asking with curiosity.

This horse which had won so many races was certainly a formidable adversary: to run against him, bet against him without large odds, was almost worse than temerity. Until this day no horse had been able to tear victory away from him.

And of a sudden, to everybody's surprise, Landáburo, attired as jockey, presented himself, with his lustrous patent leather boots, his white breeches smartly adjusted, a crimson blouse and a red cap, probably to remind him of the raw meat of the bivouac.

El Condor, on feeling the weight of his mount, rose on his hind legs, attempted to run away, but Landáburo, affecting the movements and gestures of an expert jockey, with the palm

of his hand caressed the satin neck of the horse, and succeeded in calming him in front of the grand stand.

"I know something about this," said Landáburo in his sonorous voice that echoed with military glory. "I am rather strong in athletic games and exercise. . . . Nero and many other emperors of the Roman days enhanced their reputation by taking part in sports like this. . . . I shall win. I shall triumph. I am going to ride the condor of the Andes. I have formerly raced much."

"True, very true, general," remarked Roberto.

"Landáburo," said Doña Aura, "I have here ready for you a crown of laurel and another of the sacred mistletoe."

In a burst of passion, taking Alejandro by surprise, as well as the two girls, Roberto left the grand stand, went down the stairs, and vanished in the crowd below.

Landáburo, already believing himself the victor, cast a triumphant glance along the whole row of seats, over to the track, upon the turf, on which the multitude was swarming, and from among these there rose already sundry acclamations proclaiming in advance the triumph of the Condor's bold rider.

"Three cheers for General Landáburo!" was heard.

His friends began to surround him, they shook hands with him, and he, stooping down, whispered to them:

"All these people here are ready to applaud me as the victor in this race, which I have no doubt I can win. Let there be a few that will raise the cry: 'Long life to the incorruptible chief of the Revaluation cause.'"

Suddenly Roberto, without any other distinctive mark but his white cap, appeared on his black mare.

"It is Alondra!" exclaimed Dolores, filled with joy.

"Alejandro, for Heaven's sake," tremblingly cried Doña Ana, "does Roberto mean to run in this race?"

"Yes, auntie, he is going to contest it with Landáburo. He could not resist the temptation. We cannot stop him. But it is a good thing, for the race will set him up."

Bellegarde having noticed Doña Ana's uneasiness came up to her now, and said in his kind voice:

"Have no fear, Señora, for Roberto is now in very good

health. It seemed a pity to me that the mare he presented to me as a gift should not run in this race to-day."

Then he approached Inés, and Dolores remarked that, just as on the night before at the theater, the bosom of her companion heaved gently.

The mare which seemed to recognize her rider, gave signs of affection and pleasure, held her head up high, where the white star showed, and threw intelligent glances at the vast crowd.

Dolores and Inés, interrupting a painful silence, spoke to each other.

"Aren't you betting?" asked Dolores.

"We are."

"Which is your horse?"

"Tell me yours first."

And then both at the same time:

"I shall bet on Alondra."

The places were assigned and after enormous difficulties, the horses, untameable and champing their bits, jerking up their heads, swerving hither and thither, eager to start off too early, were at last standing in file. Eyes full of fire, ears restless, they danced nervously in their places, turning about the same point, and waiting every instant for the order to start.

Alondra, accustomed to the circus, kept her post, and showed with pride the elegance of her feminine slenderness, letting her impatience be seen only by the inflation of her nostrils, the trembling of her flanks, and the flash of her eyes.

Alejandro approached, and with his handkerchief he rubbed rapidly the feet, the forelocks, and the chest of the handsome beast.

"One!" counted Gacharnah.

And the horses gathered their strength for the event.

"Two!"

With an irresistible impulse El Condor made a false start, and with great trouble was brought back again to his place.

The file of horses had to be rearranged.

New motions of impatience.

"One! . . . Two! . . ."

Gacharnah, fronting the horses, humps his shoulder, spies

the instant in which the heads of the horses are in line, and watching closely his opportunity, he turns out of the way, drops the flag, and says:

“ Three! ”

They are off like lightning. Again the earth trembles and thunders. It is a hurricane in which every particle moves, turns, and is swallowed up in the whole.

The horses fly, belly near the ground. The riders, standing solely in their stirrups, stretch themselves at full length along the neck of their mounts. The wind swells their blouses and roars in their ears.

El Buitre, in four jumps, takes the lead. Roberto on his Alondra remains behind. The whole group runs like demons, devouring distance, following the line of the red stakes. Suddenly the Arab chestnut leaves the track, runs on in a straight line, and in a giddy course arrives at a ditch, far away from the circle, recovers herself, and makes a tremendous leap, her rider being flung on the plain.

Those behind already begin to turn in on the home stretch. The spectators follow the events with exclamations:

“ Sol is getting ahead.”

“ Rifle is gaining.”

“ No, . . . Inca has passed him.”

“ Now it is Huascar! Thousand pesos on Huascar! Raise the gavel! ”

“ Thousand pesos on Condor! He is running very fresh! ”

“ Alondra remains behind. She won't get there till day after to-morrow.”

The black mare, slipping along easily near the stakes marking the limits of the track, at a mechanical and regular gallop, held back by Roberto, does not seem to worry at all, despite being in the rear.

Dolores and Inés feel discouraged in the midst of all this enthusiasm and shouting.

Montellano, afoot, wildly gesticulating, completely engrossed with a spectacle that is new to him, and profiting by the moment that seems to be safe for a bet, screams, looking at Alejandro:

“ Fifty pounds on Condor against Alondra! ”

"I take you!" says Bellegarde quietly, without moving his glass away from the track.

The attention and the interest paid the race was now concentrated upon Condor and Alondra, and upon their two riders, Roberto and Landáburo. The multitude was divided quite capriciously into two great parties, split up into smaller or larger groups, and was cheering one or the other of its favorites. They were heated to boiling point, and identified themselves entirely with the triumph of one or the other.

And now, getting tremendous odds in wagers, the swan-like horse, with Landáburo astride of it, was forging ahead like a shot.

"The Condor!" was the cry from the throats of an immense throng that already began to cluster around towards the goal.

Dolores and Inés, hiding their emotions, felt nevertheless, greatly annoyed, as though these tokens of encouragement for Landáburo were intended to offend them personally. In their minds they made unexampled efforts for their hero's horse, kept their eyes glued to the glass with which they eagerly continued scanning the distance, wishing to infuse new strength into the limbs of the lagging mare. Doña Ana moved her lips, with her gaze into space.

"El Condor! El Condor!" was the universal cry.

Landáburo has triumphed. Half the spectators are palpitating with the intoxication of victory, while the other half have become silent under the discouragement of defeat.

"Long life to Landáburo, the invincible, the matchless chief!" some of the crowd are now vociferating.

Alejandro to Montellano:

"Five hundred dollars more on Alondra!"

"Done!" says Montellano.

Meanwhile Alondra, feeling the bridle less strained, is stretching her neck, lengthens her stride, thumps the ground with greater vigor, shows more power in her thighs of steel.

"La Alondra!" all are now roaring. "She outdistances Huascar! . . . She is passing Rifle! . . . She is gaining on Inca! . . . She has passed him! . . . She is gaining on Condor! . . ."

Now anxious silence everywhere. The black mare and the swanlike horse are thundering ahead foot by foot, ear by ear. All are holding their breath. It is a blissful anxiety, a pleasure full of agony. It would almost seem as if these people, surprised, are waiting for a catastrophe. There is now no outcry, no applause. Far away the field is resounding with the noise of the struggle. The dull thunder of hoofbeats is growing apace in volume as it approaches more and more. The eager breath of lungs pumping with a supreme effort can be heard from a distance. Now and then the quick snap of the whip may be noticed. The spectators grow pale. Their eyes open wide, hands become crisp. Foreheads contract with extreme tension. And more and more is to be distinguished the powerful thumping of the speeding horses coming ever nearer. Now they are coming. . . . Now they are already there . . . and Condor and the black mare always neck and neck . . . ear by ear, hoof by hoof.

Both groups of partizans have grown mute, and in the silence of this multitude, electrified for the time, are plainly heard the outcries of Landáburo, the lashing of his whip, with which he desperately urges on the Condor of the Andes.

Roberto is coming on silently, quietly, extended along the slender neck of the mare.

Inés and Dolores are bent over the railing in front of their seats, holding back their breath.

"Alondra" cheers on Dolores, "Alondrita! . . . one more leap . . . just one more effort, one more spurt!"

Bellegarde is cleaning off the dust from his monocle, and with an air of perfect nonchalance he adjusts it anew in a corner of his eye.

Alexander, serene, is adding up the figures in his notebook.

Montellano, quite in a frenzy, is holding aloft his athletic fists, and breaks out:

"Cursed Condor, get on, get on! Make haste!"

El Buitre, with a "tortoise in his belly," without a horseman on top of him, is running up and down in front of the grand stand.

Now they have almost made the goal. Condor has gained

the length of a head. Roberto rises in his stirrups, stretches himself more flatly along the neck of his mare, taps her with the palms of his hands, loosens the bridle, gives a little cry of encouragement to her, and Alondra, in a new burst, in three vigorous jumps, with a supreme effort, gains the lost space, passes her rival, and amidst thunderous applause, arrives at the goal, pursues her course for another short spell, displays herself to the delighted spectators on the grand stand, lifts her head proudly, and seems to understand the glory of the struggle she has made, and the pride of triumph.

There is a burst of music. Handkerchiefs are being waved by the ladies. Thousands of arms are flourishing hats in the air. Little gloved hands are applauding. The multitude on the wide meadow are shrieking themselves hoarse. There rises to the firmament one enormous shout of enthusiasm, one roar of triumph and of joy.

"Viva La Alondra! . . . Viva Roberto Ávila!" These shouts sweep along the whole landscape, like an endless wave of applause.

He climbs up the steps of the grand stand, amidst handclapping, hugs, admiring glances. He smiles at them all, with his colorless lips, still trembling, without air in his lungs.

"Roberto," exclaims Doña Aura, "I shall have you figure in my fourth chapter."

Dolores and Inés both turn to him, rising. González Mogolón hands him the crown and the medal. All are making room for the victor to pass.

Dolores, blushing with pleasure and pride, offers him the crown.

And he, in an almost inaudible voice, says to her:

"Thanks, . . . and the rose . . . the rose of Castile?"

Inés affixes the medal to his breast; a tricolored ribbon hangs down from it.

"*Merci bien*, . . . and my violets?" he asks.

Bellegarde offers him his hand with profound affection.

The march from Aida is being intoned with its triumphal ring.

Doña Ana says to him, in a low voice:

"Are you not feeling well, my son?"



"Yes, dear mother better than ever," he replies.

Then Bellegarde gives his arms to the old lady, and gets into the coach with her.

The multitude hastens back to the city. The coaches, after filing silently along the meadow, turn into the highroad and roll on noisily. In the rear, amongst a throng of a thousand horsemen, is Roberto, acclaimed by all. The horses, infected by the general enthusiasm, describe elegant figures, prance, champ their bits, snort and cover their harness with flakes of froth. The ball of the sinking sun goes down amidst plumes of scarlet. The atmosphere is bathed in rosy vapor. The defile of the horsemen is wrapped in the splendors of an apotheosis.

Landáburo, eaten up with envy, is nevertheless walking with his accustomed pose. Hearing the merry clamor around Roberto, he grins with a gesture of displeasure. He twists his beard with fingers that are shaking with rage. And he attempts to explain the reason of his defeat:

"The race was mine, but it happened that . . ."

And he added:

"Friends, Bogotá is amusing herself. . . . But will these rejoicings last?"

And again was heard the mysterious date of the revolution which the chief was preparing:

"On the first of January . . . to-morrow at the bar of the Senate . . . and afterwards the meeting."

The mass of horsemen, enveloped by clouds of dust, which the last rays of the sun were gilding, went on at a gallop, entered the streets, their glittering trappings emitting sparks, and the clamor, the champing of bits, the neighing and snorting of all these horses, the crack of the whips, the shock of the headgear, mingled together until it became one sole thunder of noise that resounded within the walls of the neighboring houses and arrived like an alarm at the sleeping and distant suburbs.

The invited guests of the Sport Club sat down at the banquet prepared in honor of the victor. Roberto was at the head of the long table, and on either side of him Bellegarde, Alejandro and General Ronderos. All around the table there is merriment and shouting.

From the chandelier in the center of the hall, like triumphal

spoils, are hanging, tied with the whiplash of a jockey, the white cap and the spurs of Roberto.

Towards the close of the banquet a servant takes up the branch in the center, with the escutcheons of all those present, and offers it to Roberto. The victor adds his own to it. The servant is awaiting orders, and as he does so commentaries, rumors, guesses are floating in the air, all made in a very low voice, as for instance:

"For whom? For whom! I think I know."

"Yes, yes, we understand. . . . Does he send it to Inés?"

"Do you think so? Is it for Dolores?"

Somebody else exclaimed:

"Roberto, let us know. . . . Is it for la Rondinelli?"

"Yes, yes, for la Rondinelli!" somebody suggests.

But Roberto, turning towards the servant, says in a low and tender voice:

"For my mother."

Ronderos seized a goblet of champagne, smiled with pleasure out of his big gray mustaches, and rose.

"This is to my best friend, to Senator Ávila, to you, Roberto, my former companion in the war, my defender ever, my future colleague in the cabinet!"

And all the guests after him:

"To Roberto, the victor!"

Montellano, animated by champagne, remarked:

"I am happy, and I no longer even remember my six hundred dollars . . . ! That accursed Condor!"

Alejandro, moved to the depths of his soul, gazed at his friend with the air of a brother, shook him vigorously by the arm, and murmured:

"Roberto, this goblet must be drained to the last drop. I feel that this triumph of yours is no ephemeral one. Let your life from now on, until this hour an unsteady one, become one of settled purpose. Go on to final happiness with a firm tread. Spirit, will power, energy! You have a political future before you, together with wealth, general esteem, the affectionate regard of society, therefore laurels, the palm, the sword, and youth. . . . Ah, and that which is worth more still: the love of two women!"

## CHAPTER XXIV

## EQUALITY

THE president of the Senate mounted the steps, sat down below the baldachin of yellow silk, token of his dignity, took a good look at the persons in the hall, at the steps in the front, which were crowded with a restless multitude, threw a glance at the clock, arranged some papers on his table, then bent down, stretched out his hand, and seized the bell. In the session hall, where the senators were about to occupy their seats, and in the barred-off space where a great throng were swarming about, the murmuring ceased. And in the midst of general expectation the President said:

“Mr. Secretary, please call the roll!”

“The honorable senators will please answer as their names are called. . . . Alba, Ávila, Benavides, Borja . . .”

The secretary, in the center of the hall, was calling off in a sing-song voice, the alphabetical list of the senators, and these, rising at their desks, or hurrying from the doors leading into the hall, as soldiers would run where danger threatened, hastening to meet the enemy, in this heated atmosphere, presaging a tempest, would reply in accents sharp and aggressive, “Here! Present!” Just as though they hurled a challenge at the foe.

“There is a quorum present, Mr. President!” declared the secretary then, getting on his legs for the purpose.

“The session is now opened,” said Sánchez Méndez solemnly, buttoning his coat, which was somewhat of a tight fit.

The secretary next, in a monotonous voice, read sundry documents of no importance, and this wearied the public, anxious to get soon to the debate on the canalization contract. Sánchez Méndez had at the first session of the Congress introduced a bill, disapproving of the whole project, in order to oust Ronderos and undermine the Government.

Then the journal of the last session was approved, the unfinished business left for the presiding officers to attend to was reported on, telegrams received were read. . . . Suddenly there was a burst of applause from amongst the lobby. Alcón, in a fearful perspiration, and wiping his bald head, had just come in.

"To-day's session is going to be decisive," observed Sánchez. "If we have a majority, Ronderos is a dead man."

"Up to now," rejoined Alcón, "we are short. The Government have eleven votes, and we have only ten."

"And Benavides?" said Sánchez anxiously, but without raising his voice. "Were you at his house? . . . Is he not coming? . . . We need him urgently."

"Things are bad. That is where I come from. I left to González Mogollón the task of making him get up from bed, and dressing him. He will drag him here, living or dead."

Sánchez, in perplexity, was rubbing his beard with a disturbed air.

Having cleared his forehead of its frown while gazing at the senators, and raising a horse-laugh in the lobby by a jest, the secretary next with a roguish accent began to read a long petition from the inventor, Sánchez de Peñanegra, wherein that gentleman prayed for subventions in behalf of his contrivances, which he claimed were poorly recompensed by the Government.

"With the sole object," this genius said, "of aiding the people, the military men and the philosophers, I have invented, planned and described things of undoubted utility, such as a machine which I have named the Peña Negra, and which is far superior to the present steam, water, electric motors, etc. With this machine modern locomotion can be entirely modified. . . . Then, a machine for weighing the heavenly bodies. . . . Another to manufacture tablets of paste or pancakes, as well as a palatable food out of the fruit of the guava tree, and greatly to be preferred to those of Vélez. . . . Next, a new process to compress salt, and another to extract the by-products of hemp. Again, a complete set of apparatus for the cultivation and the rendering marketable of coffee and sugar cane, much better than all those now in use. . . . One machine to extract the salt out of the beet root. . . . Another to make guns without repercussion. . . ."

"In charge of Senator Sandoval y Sabogal," said the President.

But now the secretary took a sheet of stamped paper, on which there was writing in large characters, and in a solemn and vibrating voice he read, amidst complete silence and the breathless attention of the public:

“ Order of the Day :

“ For a second reading :

“ Bill by which the contract of canalization and colonization, with the assistance of the Minister of Finance, is disapproved.”

There was a murmur of excitement amongst the public. Some senators, who had been walking about the passages, came quickly in. Others, who up to now had seemed asleep in their chairs, sat up suddenly. Alcón, who had stood beneath the baldachin of the President, went back to his desk with a grave air, and noticing that all eyes were upon him, drew out his key, lifted the walnut lid, put his head in, seemed to be looking for something, took out a paper, and then, like a man who has made up his mind and is in search of a victim, asked :

“ Will the secretary please inform me whether the Minister has yet put in an appearance? ”

Alcón, seeing that his party could not win that day, intended to have the debate postponed, and was going to have the order of the day altered, because of the absence of the Minister, when General Ronderos, opening a passage for himself through the groups of men that greeted him respectfully, appeared under the arches of the passage, reached the session hall, crossed the hall with a firm step, and took a seat at a vacant desk, with his back to a window. The light which, coming down from behind, shone upon his gray hair and gave it a silvery halo, brought out the lines of his face very strongly, deepened the corners of his eyes, and made his martial features stand out clearly in lights and shades.

The President ordered that the report of the commission appointed by him, and consisting of Alcón and Karlonoff, be read. Alcón went up to the center of the hall, where he spoke in a low voice with one of the senators. He inquired where he could have some pages of the report copied. One of the clerks went out hastily towards the office of the copying clerks, and Alcón followed him. He passed quickly through the glass-covered corridors, where a long row of overcoats was seen hanging along the wall. He made his way through a dense crowd of lobbyists, and came to the empty hall which was adorned only by portraits of former presidents wearing the tricolored sash across the chest. Passing through he threw stealthily a glance at these tricolored sashes that had for him an irresistible attraction, and

then slipping through additional groups, with a mien of intense preoccupation with most important business, and knitting his brow, he crossed some more offices until he at last arrived at the one reserved for the copying clerks. There he saw a dozen of them writing away in haste, bent over their desks, engaged in drawing up copies of the bill, of the report of the commission, in letters traced beautifully in firm and careful lines. Alcón gathered here hurriedly two sheets, returned the same way, and with a certain affectation, feeling always the looks of the public fixed on himself and his doings, handed these papers up to the secretary's table. Then he passed near the shorthand reporters, made a sign, as if to say, "Now, pay attention!" and thus reached his seat once more, sat down comfortably, thrust his beard into the hollow of his hand, and then seemed to be at his ease, with the assurance of a man who is ready now to listen to his own work, to relish his own phrases. There was a moment of expectancy, and the whole of the audience, in the lobby, in the different halls, in the passages, meanwhile were already discussing, whispering, gesticulating, winking to each other, with signs of mystery, telling each other of astounding news, of terrible revelations, which were contained in that voluminous report.

The secretary read it. It was a document in which there was combined all the technical knowledge of the "chief of bridges and highroads" with the astute legal lore of the former under-secretary. And the phrases of ancient parliamentary usage, the antiquated words of the one were mingled with the gallicisms and the scientific barbarisms of the other.

"In conclusion, honorable senators, your commission has become convinced, if it may be permitted to say so, in view of the short time at its disposal, that the contract for the work of canalization is a monstrosity, since notwithstanding that the Government was authorized by Law No. 137, so many times cited before, and there is mention made of dams and dykes, it does not say that these are to be moveable dams, because of the steep cuts in the mountain chain; and this fact being superimposed, and as by reason of that the whole contract is rendered null and void, . . . ."

The report wound up with the following proposal:

"Dating from this second reading, the Senate disapproves of the proposed contract of canalization and colonization."

In the lobby one group that was led by Landáburo broke out in applause at this juncture. But another group objected to that. There were mutterings, confusion, and the President seized the bell. But nobody paid any attention, and the uproar was terrific. In the whole gallery, and upon the steps, the spectators kept on stamping in a regular, rhythmic beat, and it was just like a dull thunder in a storm. The voices, some hoarse and rude, like the tones of an overworked organ, others shrill and high, like those of flageolets, contended against each other in that hatred-charged atmosphere of battle.

"Death to Ronderos! . . . Long life to him! . . . Be still! . . . Death to him!"

The president of the Senate, placid, allowed this scene to continue, but when the noise decreased, a violent ringing of his bell was heard. And Sánchez, smiling hypocritically, remarked:

"The presiding officer begs the gentlemen in the lobby respectfully to have the kindness to moderate their manifestations."

An applause of agreement greeted these words.

The secretary then read, in order to begin the combat:

"Article I. The contrast of canalization and colonization is disapproved in all its parts."

At this all looks turned to Ronderos, who remained serene, as became a veteran in these struggles. For all those present the disapproval bill was a political stroke, which was aimed at the Cabinet, and which would mean its fall, if successful. Landáburo in the lobby directed the tumult, and waited only for the end of the session, with the contract already defeated, in order to receive Ronderos in the big plaza with a hostile demonstration. And this projected demonstration, the first in a series to come, was to be the first blow of the revolution, the first spark of the fire. Alcón already saw disaster overtaking Roberto, his abhorred rival. With the whole enterprise dead, he and his would be sacrificed. . . . Ah, and he rejoiced in advance, hoping that the hour would come when he might be able to read to him that paragraph which he himself had added to the outlined project: "The deposit of one million francs which has been made in behalf of the treasury, remains there in favor of the state, as also do all the machinery and other property of the canalization enterprise."

Karlonoff, who had affiliated anew with the opposition, since he believed the cabinet tottering, obtained the floor to support the report, and with his air of disdain and compassion toward his ignorant adversaries and his smile of satisfaction with his own wisdom, glad to feel that here need be no waste of statistics, supported his motion by a speech in which there returned all the old arguments already used in the ministry (under the word "Canal," from the cyclopædia) and in the columns of *La Integridad*.

"But there is something more serious than all this, Mr. President," he said in conclusion, "we must also consider this question from the point of view of national security."

And he halted for an instant, enamored of this phrase, knowing well that this feature would stir the lobby.

"Yes, yes, it is a national question!" shouted Landáburo.

"It is," continued Karlonoff with animation, turning his eyes away from the rostrum of the presiding officer and towards the lobby, "it is, as I have just remarked, a question of national security. It is even more. The whole Latin race in America, yes, the whole Latin race, gentlemen, is seriously menaced. With this canalization project realized, we shall be invaded, just as the Normans once invaded Gaul. In place of proposing those pacts with companies from other continents, I should propose that, if canalization is really needed, if it be indispensable, it be done by South Americans alone. I, as former editor of the *Military Album*, and in consequence ex-officio member of the whole American military press, address myself with these present words not only to those who at this moment are within reach of my voice, but to all the heads and officials of the Latin republics, in order that we may unite and work to strengthen the relations between the soldiers of sister nations, who have identical origin, who in the future will have an equal destiny, and who in fratricidal strife have been sheltered by the tents of the same or of opposite camps, all of them nevertheless children of the great Latin family. I propose, gentlemen, an idea which occurs to this moment: if this canalization of the Magdalena is absolutely necessary, then I propose that it be done by a company made up from Paraguay, Ecuador and Nicaragua, in such a manner that these nations may come to know each other better, and that this be the beginning of bonds of mutual esteem. It is



not desirable that these nations should disagree and harm each other, but on the contrary they should grow and consolidate themselves for the benefit of all Latin America, and this, gentlemen, stretches from the wastes of northern Mexico to the desert table lands of Patagonia. To resume, gentlemen, no canalization of the Magdalena! Let us be ready to support, cost what may, this motto: 'South America for South America.'

Alcón did not want to speak. He did not desire to lose himself in discussions. The important point was the voting, and in silence, from his seat, he let his glance travel all over the hall, and with slight movements of his head he went on counting the senators present and their stand on the question. He went up to the baldachin under which Sánchez Méndez sat in high state.

"Write two lines to Benavides," he murmured. "He must come, even if he should die of it."

Sánchez sent a new emissary to the house of the invalid, telling him that the fate of the *Integros* depended on him.

"How is Pinillos going to vote?" asked Sánchez then.

"You know that he is lame. But I have him at Karlonoff's side and Karlonoff is going to make him rise for his vote in time. . . . His vote is decisive."

Alcón nodded his head, but took over his eyeglasses a peep at the senator whom they held ready in front. It was a little man with an enormous bald head, with trembling limbs, of weak constitution, his head sunk between his shoulders, an inane smile on his lips, with a jaw like a goat, turbid eyes, eyes of an idiot that were forever seeking the ceiling. This imbecile, victim of a cerebral disease, had been elected without himself knowing why, perhaps because of some transaction between two political circles. He had himself taken to the sessions led by the hand. When he entered the hall he did so tottering, and once in his chair fell always back into his usual state of lethargy. When he slept he would sob and sigh like a child who falls asleep after crying a spell, and when the hour of voting arrived he grew bewildered, smiled to right and left, stammered unintelligible words, made signs to a neighbor to have him write his vote down on the ballot, and finally, with a despairing effort, picked up the slip of paper and voted without being aware of how and on what. On other occasions he would mimic his colleague,

without understanding and without a will of his own, when he saw that they rose from their seats, he would succeed in gaining his feet, manage to keep standing an instant, while the secretary counted the ballots, and then would let his shoulders drop again, sink into his seat, like an idiot, looking dully into empty space.

Karlonoff concluded his speech, and satisfied with himself, nodding his head and wearing his malicious smile, he went into the corridors to continue there his arguments, to sum up his invectives, and to utilize phrases which in the heat of his own eloquence he had momentarily forgotten, being meanwhile the recipient of congratulations and handshakes.

General Ronderos then had the floor, and in the midst of an intense silence he rose with perfect calmness. In the lobby new anxiety was noticeable, and a strong movement was made among the curious to force an entrance into the hall. Those who by hundreds had remained in the corridor, eager to listen, and to gather in haste some of those telling and picturesque phrases that had been cheered, pushed and crowded those that stood in their way. On the flight of steps fronting the session hall necks were craned, a large throng managed to gain an entrance, shoving, closely packed, finding fault with those in front, so that the uproar went on increasing for a time and a number of senators raised their heads in alarm, as though afraid that suddenly they might be swept along by the wave of half crazed people. In the diplomatic box and in that of the reporters a whispering of curiosity began, so much so that the four stenographers in the middle of the hall, pencil in hand, gaze fixed sidewise, and ready to listen, were waiting.

Ronderos spoke in a natural tone of voice, and in simple and clear terms explained the whole question with familiar knowledge, keeping his exposition of it on territory where he stood firm. Then he drew from his own statement of the case powerful arguments to destroy those of his adversaries, and without losing his serenity and his impressiveness for a moment, he showed clearly the legality and the rectitude that the Government had observed throughout in conducting the business, concluding by demonstrating the palpable advantages which the nation was now enjoying from it all.

He enlivened his speech with fitting quotations, with pertinent illustrations, and with some rather crude soldier's phrases.

"Nothing of what is now happening is a surprise to me," he next continued, "and there come to my mind the words of a great Spaniard, Mendizabal, to whom Spain owes a great deal of her progress. 'Amongst politicians the downfall of the great tickles the small fry. The masses do not grow enthusiastic over success, if it is represented by a single man. Collective vulgarity tends always to maintain a level.' Having sprung from the general level by merit alone, my importance, my distinction have procured me only the hatred of my enemies. Those, my merits, have raised me to a splendid position: *Aliena invidia, esplendentem*. I shine by reason of the envy of others, as Titus Livius says."

Towards the end of his speech, raising his voice and putting more warmth both into his delivery and his glance, he turned upon Alcón and Karlonoff, whom he had hitherto not mentioned. He began to sum up his arguments and his rejoinder, and to disqualify the campaign made against himself and to rob it of all its assumed aspect of patriotism and justice, he launched into a tremendous attack on Sánchez Méndez. He discharged the whole force of his bitter, cutting words upon the head of the president of the Senate.

These two, he said, Karlonoff and Alcón, knew as eye witnesses about the facts, with what scrupulous care this question had been studied by his department. But he would not waste time in disproving their arguments. These had been analyzed, aye, pulverized already, during the first reading and debate on the bill. He preferred this time to face the leader, the real person responsible for these present attacks (and at these words he turned toward the spot where was seated Sánchez Méndez, who cowered at this, folded his hands on the table in front of him, and pretended to read some papers on it), the chief of the *Integros*, who under pretext of an administrative question had stirred up this political campaign in which the whole government was being assailed, and in doing so was furnishing strength and arms to the revolution, thus occasioning the first alarms and the inspiration to a disastrous war. But he himself, he went on in his terrific arraignment, while still at the head of the government, would steadily pursue the same course, would try to prevent such a national calamity, would conjure all, would take upon himself all hatred, defying the wrath of his open

enemies, such as Cardoso, as well as of those who fought from ambush like Karlonoff and Alcón, of the deserters, such as the president of the Senate.

"If I am unable to find more moderate words," the General exclaimed, striking his hand heavily upon the desk, "it is because I am conscious of the great responsibility resting with me at the present time. Was he not of those who, ten years prior, had helped construct that constitution which had given peace to the Republic during the past decade? Was not he who now is my adversary my colleague in the cabinet, he who since has become a partizan of the so-called Revaluation? I shall not detain you recalling to your memory the causes of his political ruin. But it will be remembered that since that time, without better advice than to cause destruction, without other incentive than his unholy ambition, he has turned against his own achievements, his own ideals, and has made an alliance with his enemies of yesterday, with my enemies of forever. . . . Ah, once he had lost his place in the cabinet, he did not resign himself to obscurity, and has always, out of the most odious motives, by means of the most improper alliances, attempted to become again a prominent figure. . . ."

Sánchez Méndez had withdrawn towards the rear, seeking the darkness which the ample folds of the curtains on the baldachin afforded him. But his excitement could be noticed from the nervous trembling of his hands, when, to affect indifference and preoccupation, he took off his eyeglasses, played with them, twirled them in his fingers. But on hearing these last phrases, he changed color, and croaked:

"Mr. Minister, I must call your highness to order."

"To order! . . . Yes, to order!" scornfully retorted General Ronderos, livid with indignation, while in the lobby harsh voices were bawling: "To order! To order!" . . . Landáburu's rude organ could be easily distinguished amongst these.

A redoublement of these interjections in the lobby went on like rolling thunder. Arms were up in the air. The spectators pushed and crowded each other. Challenges were heard. The flight of wooden stairs where hundreds were in a solid mass, creaked ominously as though about to give way.

The orator on his part, when these interruptions hailed on him, turned his face towards the front, in a line with the Presi-

dent's seat. The light streaming in from the window, striking him from afar, brought out clearly the features of his energetic face, the large, bony forehead, the thick eyebrows, the curve of his nose, the bristling mustache, cut short at the lips, the salient jaw, the whole of that countenance which revealed a dominating soul, predestined for command and strife. Even the manner of raising his head, which became erect and leaned towards the back, had an imperious air, a martial one, a gesture of challenging the world, as if in that heated atmosphere, before that hostile lobby, he felt himself to be on a battlefield, facing the enemy.

"And you are pleased to call me to order?" he exclaimed. "On the contrary, it is I really who ought to call your excellency to order, because in imposing silence on me you are going beyond the limits of your functions. If you wish to defend yourself, you have but to call upon the vice-president of the Senate, invest him temporarily with your authority, come down from your platform, and reply as simple senator to the charges I am bringing against you. Now is the time for me to speak, and I shall speak, in spite of you. For months and months, I have been attacked in twenty periodicals, I have been assailed in every tone and by every means, and I have kept silent. Although I might have suspended those libelous sheets, I have refrained from doing so. Therefore I have waited impatiently for this hour, this hour when, face to face, before the whole nation, we should have a decisive duel. And now that the day has come, instead of replying to me, to oppose reason with reason, all that Señor Sánchez Méndez can find to do is to profit by his ephemeral authority and to attempt to impose silence on me. In this decisive moment one of us two must conquer. . . . He or I! . . . The nation will judge. . . ."

And he looked about him, along the hall itself, then turned to the right and threw a comprehensive glance at the lobby, which now listened to him with attention, and continued:

"The chief of the *Integros* could not resign himself to live in the shade. His qualities and his defects explain at the same time his defeats and his ambitions. Capricious Nature has fashioned the clay of this temperament in such a manner as to include more than a mere noble name. But she has not finished any one of all her sketches, but left everything in an incomplete state. Several features, several touches more, and he would

have been what he desired to be, a complete, extraordinary man. But as it is, unfinished, he is only an extravagant and pernicious figure. At one and the same time fickle and obstinate, self-willed and weak, impassioned to the point of frenzy in pursuing objects which by turn he idolizes and destroys, adoring to-day the gods whom to-morrow he curses, he has spent his life in retracing all paths and betraying all ambitions, stirring all kinds of conflagrations, and pursuing the inconstancy of his fixed ideas through every camp. . . .

“And this former believer in authority, the passionate champion of constitutional liberty, who in days gone by strongly opposed mere agitators, is to-day a powerful auxiliary for the revolutionaries, all the more useful as he still hides under the appearance and the name of his former doctrines. The accusations of the agitators acquire thereby a semblance of truth, something like the impartial verdict of history, when they receive unction at the hands of this false high priest. After the treble melancholy bred by disaster, age, and abandonment by others, he has lived to see popularity turning once more towards him, prodigally lavishing those endearments on him which the partizans of the opposition have in store for renegades. And all the Volscians impatient to assail Rome lift up in triumph this ruined Coriolanus. . . .”

In the lobby, on the row of the journalists, among the swarming multitude filling the passages, invading the hall itself up to the desks of the senators, while Ronderos himself now sat down, broke out a thunder of applause, and following that the roar of rage from the enemies—hoarse, broken voices, voices that issued from dry throats. From amongst this multitude of men in the grip of political passion, there came threats, insults, charges, vociferations, all aimed at the minister who had just resumed his place—against Bellegarde, against Ávila and Borja, a storm of angry recriminations which the president of the Senate permitted to rage on at the risk of a bloody conflict in the lobby. At last, seizing the bell with an apparent rush of fear, and giving the act the appearance of impartiality and fairness, he called the lobby to order, and, recognizing in him their real leader, they became at once mute. A number of senators approached the Minister to shake hands with him, and General Ronderos then went out into the corridor to take the air, and

while some there cheered him loudly, he strolled up and down, perspiration rolling down his forehead, in a state of agitation, breathing hard.

Alcón went up to the president's seat, standing on the steps leading up, leaning against the table, and conferring with Sánchez, profiting from the prevailing confusion that brought a temporary truce.

"This is not a question of speeches but of votes," said Sánchez in a dull voice, his features decomposed and his hands trembling.

"True, but they have the majority."

"And Benavides?"

"Benavides is not coming. He is dying."

"They will beat us by two votes."

A new emissary was sent to ascertain whether the dying man would come.

"I am going to adjourn the session," said Sánchez Méndez.

"Let us postpone the vote till to-morrow."

"That will not do," observed Alcón. "To-morrow General Torralba is going to arrive. He is to support Ronderos, and Karlonoff will have to withdraw, for he is his substitute. Let us not defer the vote."

And in his perplexity the president of the Senate, interrupting the general conversation that had ensued, announced:

"The session will be continued."

Silence returned. Alejandro obtained the floor. After his speeches on the occasion of the first debate, and after the one Ronderos had just made, he did not choose to enter into any discussion involving the basis of the whole matter, but his present object was merely to make a statement of a personal character, in the name of himself and Senator Ávila.

Everybody was listening with close attention, because it was known that he as well as Roberto Ávila had invested in the canalization scheme the bulk of their funds and risked a great fortune.

"We are soon going to put this matter to a vote," added Alejandro, "according to all appearances. The friends of General Ronderos are in the majority. . . ."

"It is certain," exclaimed Karlonoff, "that you beat us in numbers."

"Very well," Alejandro went on; "let us state that in this decisive debate Señor Ávila and myself declare ourselves spontaneously disqualified. We have a voice, but no vote. By our own choice, we declare the minority. The vote therefore will be lost to General Ronderos, but he requires here only votes of full value. Our adversaries only *count* votes, while we weigh them."

And after a brief eulogy pronounced by him in behalf of Ronderos, and his patriotism, he went over to the side of Roberto, and jointly they turned to go. Ronderos stretched out his hand to Alejandro:

"Yes, this will be a defeat that honors us," he said.

Karlonoff slipped over between the desks, and whispered to Sánchez:

"Then we have the majority. . . . We shall crush them by the tactics employed at Waterloo, that consisted in . . ."

But before a technical explanation could unfold itself, the president of the Senate remarked drily, without making a pause between the two sentences:

"The debate will now be closed. It is closed."

The secretary read anew the paragraph in the bill by which the contract was declared disavowed: those words, read in a raised voice, vibrant, and having a sinister sonority, sounded like a court sentence.

Sánchez Méndez was recovering his vigor, seeing now triumph secure, and asked:

"Does the Senate approve of the paragraph just read?"

There was a rising in the rows of desks.

"Yes, there is approval."

"Let the vote be verified," said Karlonoff, who wished to relish the victory just scored.

"Those in the affirmative will please rise on their feet."

Alcón gave the signal, rose, and behind him all the enemies of Ronderos followed his example. The secretary counted the vote.

"One . . . two . . . three . . . six . . . eight . . . nine . . . and . . ."

Pinillos, on being elbowed by Karlonoff, stupidly looked on both sides, smiled, grunted, and got up all a-tremble.

"Ten," added the secretary.



In the lobby, on the galleries, some applause was heard, and Landáburu, rising in the tumult, shouted:

"Bravo! Death to the Minister!"

Following a touch on the bell the President, in a voice trembling with excitement, and full of joy, said:

"Those who are in favor of the negative."

The other side had risen slowly, keeping a calm look in face of their defeat. The secretary began to count them:

"One! . . . Two! . . . Four! . . . Seven . . . eight . . . nine . . ."

Pinillos turned in his seat and opened his eyes, and in the belief that another test had been made, and always smiling with his imbecile beatitude, rose once more. The secretary halted a moment, but then declared again:

"Ten!"

"Even vote. . . ."

"No, no, . . ."

After the feverish tension of the spirits, seeing that the irresponsible paralytic had equalized the vote, defeated it, held up the final decision and added a comic note to the drama, the public burst out in roars of laughter, laughter that shook the ceiling.

With this grotesque incident that Pinillos had furnished, after a tension lasting for hours, cheerfulness suddenly was reestablished in the minds of those present. From the lobby, from the press seats, there rained cat calls, witty sayings, jokes, all of which Pinillos did not understand, although they made him smile again, perfectly happy, feeling himself the center of all the looks, the goal of all the smiles of the others. Only Alcón and Karlonoff did not smile. They on the contrary threw him black looks, and made signs to him that he had acted very foolishly. The imbecile on his part, glancing around and seeing on the one hand the lobby which was still laughing and on the other the senators who were recovering from the fit, from being happy became a most bewildered creature, bursting first into another volley of hysterical laughter, and then broke out in a flood of tears, just like a child that settles down to a good cry.

Sánchez Méndez, knitting his brow into a frown, and with that air of an Asiatic despot assumed by him since the first mo-

ment they had made him president of the Senate, threw upon the tumultuous crowd a glance of penetrating anger, then grasped the bell in a rage, and as soon as the whispering had ceased, the boisterous laughter had been stilled, he said in a tone of command:

“The presiding officers have resolved to take steps for the rectification of the vote just taken.”

Alcón and Karlonoff understood his maneuver at once. They placed themselves in the seats next to the paralytic, and glued their eyes to his. The latter instantly began to tremble, without knowing what he was to do. But then he vaguely remembered that he had gotten up from his seat at the wrong time. When the members adverse to the contract stood up, Pinillos remained seated. When, on the other hand, the friends of Ronderos rose, Pinillos acted in the like manner. He was huddled in his chair and did not budge. The voting, therefore, again resulted in both sides being of equal strength, and this was announced amidst a violent ringing of the bell, Sánchez being still in a towering rage. Bursts of laughter broke out anew on every side. But the President could not make up his mind to admit the battle lost. Seeing, therefore, that Pinillos had two watchers by his seat, he resolved to make the secretary interrogate the imbecile, as to whether his “vote had been negative or affirmative,” and when thus asked Karlonoff and Alcón bent over him and murmured to him, both at the same time:

“Affirmative.”

Pinillos appeared to have an instant of lucidity, smiled, made a gesture as if asking pardon of the President, evidently meaning to inquire of Sánchez if he should comply with the request. Then all became silent. And Pinillos, with a supreme effort, bathed in perspiration, with contracted lips, so that his teeth became visible, managed to unfetter his goat-like jaws, and with a guttural bellow succeeded in saying, while he shook from head to foot:

“. . . ative!”

Not laughter merely, but thunders of applause greeted this manifestation, and Pinillos, smiling with joy, satisfied with his achievement, thought he had at last done the proper thing, and so, seeing that many of his colleagues now rose from their seats, and that they went out to chat or smoke, and to be at their ease,

concluded he would do the same. So he also, supported by the arm of one of the employees of the Senate, made his way to the outside, found himself in the corridors, where he took quite seriously the felicitations that were heaped on him in passing. And believing that the session was now adjourned, he arrived in the vestibule, where his eyes met the long file of overcoats and umbrellas against the wall, took at random a hat from the nail, and crossing the different halls, came at last to the inner court which had been invaded by new crowds of people.

General Ronderos was strolling about, enjoying a smoke, in one of the halls where the politicians, in groups, under the scrutinizing eyes of a number of portraits, were discussing and commenting on the events of the day, especially the problem presented by the unexpected equality of votes, the probability of triumph for the one or the other party, and how to break this unstable equilibrium.

At that minute there arrived a post office employee, and handed a telegram to Ronderos, which read as follows: "Very urgent. . . . I follow immediately by express train, to occupy my seat in the Senate. Very cordially, Torralba." And the friends of Ronderos on being apprised of the near arrival of Torralba, began at once to calculate: Will he be here this afternoon? Will he succeed in deciding the balloting? . . .

Eight days before, Torralba, a nonagenarian, had acceded to the requests of his friends who, seeing the struggle bound to come, had asked him to leave his retirement — to rush to the defense of Ronderos, not alone with his vote, but also with the prestige of his name, with the authority imposed by virtue of a life without stain, consecrated in former days to the service of the republic. His name had been signed to three successive constitutions; during his long life he had exercised a powerful influence on national politics, and he had furthermore the weight of his extreme age. It seemed as though his white hair shone with the glow of the sun lighting Colombia herself.

Sánchez Méndez, Alcón, Karlonoff and others conferred together in the adjoining hall, in a nook of the window. Should they adjourn or suspend the session? What turn would this affair now take? What did parliamentary strategy counsel in a case like the present? Should they not send anew to Benavides? This situation, this equality of votes could not last.

But there arrived just that instant a messenger from González Mogollón, quite out of breath, because he had been obliged to carve by force a way for himself through the multitude that filled the anterooms and corridors, the stairs, the passageways of the capitol. He announced that Benavides was going to be there almost immediately. There had been a regular combat. The sick man had refused, declaring that he was too weak to come, and the family, too, had with tears and outcries protested against his being torn from a sickbed. But González Mogollón had proved too obstinate for them, had employed force in dressing the invalid, in spite of two failures during which the dying man had once more taken to his bed, and he had finally succeeded in conveying him in a sedan chair. . . .

"Here he comes! . . . We are saved! . . . We are going to prolong the session; it is only a question of time! . . . Let some one talk! . . . Let that ignoramus Sordo make a long speech!"

And upon instructions from Sánchez Méndez, Alcón approached Sordo, a wealthy estate owner who was in politics for the first time. A few years before he had been living in a poor way, owner of an unproductive wood, when a peon of his had discovered, quite by accident, China bark in that forest of his. Sordo then, without in the least understanding the whole business, had become rich, had acquired the reputation of an able man, of a consummate financier, likewise become correspondent of all the banks in the country, and was now considered a personage of unquestionable competence in all fiscal matters. Senator Sordo, whose name fitted him exactly, for he was horribly deaf, understood how to utilize his defective sense of hearing, for when he gave incoherent answers people would attribute it to his cunning so as not to be caught by captious questions. Alcón approached him, while Sánchez Méndez again occupied his post upon the raised platform, rang the bell, and announced that the discussion of the bill would be at once resumed, since the last vote had not resulted in a legitimate issue.

"You do the talking," Alcón contrived to let Sordo know by signs.

And the latter, who believed himself to be indispensable and who really fancied that his criticisms were listened to, his rea-

sonings appreciated, rose and obtained the floor. In a colorless voice, in a hoarse bawling, thumping his desk so sonorously that only he himself could not hear the echoes of it, he started a speech in which he scarcely ever touched as much as the rim of the subject matter he pretended to discuss. He spoke of his childhood spent in a village, of his former poverty, of quinine, of his honor, his credit, his fortune, a thing very far removed from politics, and then, infuriated by these reminiscences, he let loose on all governments in the world, on the poets (whom he particularly abominated), on learned men, on elections, announced that he would reject his salary as senator; then he maintained the impurity of all elections, and of suffrage in general, observed that for the first time in the whole world an honorable man (he himself) had been chosen, and that this meant a new era, because now politics and governments would be directed by practical men, men used to work, men without books, without education, but with money and with good intentions.

His fellow-members in the senate, feeling themselves attacked, nevertheless did not mind him, he being a plain, rough man. So they let him talk while they looked with misgivings at the clock. The people in the lobby, knowing that Sordo was inordinately fond of applause, made the gesture of applause, opened their mouths in silence, and opened and joined their hands, but without clapping them, and he, Sordo, with his deafness, imagining that words of loud acclaim were filling the hall, and that handclappings and cheers were thundering in it, never suspecting that not a sound was in reality emitted, would smile with satisfaction, would salute the public with great pleasure, just like rope-dancers do after executing a perilous feat, and would conclude with his favorite phrase: "This country is being ruined by wiseacres and priests. . . . We need above all practical men, so that . . ."

But the finale to his address was this time throttled by the big, rough voice of González, who, across the adjoining halls, was announcing himself, in tones of increasing volume:

"Here I am bringing him. . . . Although the man is dying! . . . We shall win! . . . I am attending to everything . . . I surmount every difficulty!"

The enemies of Ronderos were almost out of their senses with

joy that reinforcements were arriving for the definitive assault. Amidst general excitement they saw the sedan chair being carried almost as far as the desks, saw the small door of the vehicle being opened, and a livid face appear at the opening, with two eyes that glowed with fever, saw Benavides being carried out, wrapped in mufflers, coughing, grumbling, and at last being buried in a chair near the President's platform.

Landáburo in the lobby took care that the people whom he led should salute him with a storm of greetings.

"Three cheers for the *Integro!* . . . Long life for the patriot who would rather die at the foot of his flag!"

It was now four o'clock. The sun of the hot afternoon entered the hall with a reddish splendor, and its rays added to the breathless atmosphere new waves of heat. The air was oppressive, charged with passions, and in the whole precinct of the Senate there reigned a sultry closeness presaging a tempest.

Alcón seeing victory assured, although it was the usual hour of adjournment, moved up to the table in the center, bent over the green cloth covering the table, hurriedly made a communication, which when the secretary came to read it a moment later sounded like a challenge:

"The Senate constitutes itself in permanent session."

Rapidly the President put the matter to discussion, and ordered that it be voted upon.

Again Alejandro and Roberto abstained from voting, and the result, including the votes of Benavides, gave victory to the band hostile to Ronderos. The battle was won for the *Integros*, lost for the cabinet.

Seeing victory insured, and afraid that Benavides might faint before the final vote, Karlonoff made his way to the central table, and amidst a silence in which only the hurried breathing of the sick man could be heard, handed up another motion, namely:

"The Senate considers itself sufficiently informed, and proceeds to disapprove the contract on canalization."

There spoke next several senators, both for and against the matter, and in their speeches allowed their patriotism, their recititude, the elevation of their views clearly to be perceived. They treated the matter from every point of view, from all its aspects, with a torrent of erudition, of law, and of talent.

These eminent orators, these distinguished senators, concluded

by making it plain that under no circumstances could they agree to haste in a business of such gravity, nor to disturb the calm of the Senate.

But Sánchez Méndez and his men, without listening to these reasons, resolved to profit from the favorable circumstances obtaining, and to administer the deadly blow by proceeding with the act invalidating the contract. Thus Sánchez Méndez, while the last speech was still being delivered, exclaimed in a solemn and decisive voice:

“The discussion is going to be closed. . . . There remains . . .”

“I demand the floor,” interrupted Roberto, speaking from the arches which gave entrance to the hall, quickly flinging away a cigarette, and passing up towards his seat.

## CHAPTER XXV

### OBSTRUCTION

WHEN it became known that General Torralba would arrive that evening, the friends of Ronderos determined to gain time, even if a desperate effort should be required. Karlionoff, who was his substitute, would then have to absent himself from the Senate, and the majority be shifted in favor of Ronderos. It was no longer a mere question of defending or saving the contract, but of sparing the upright old general, the noble patriot, the disgrace of a censure and depriving his antagonists of the pleasure of vanquishing him. It was, above all, a political question now, victory or ruin for a cabinet which had done its utmost to avoid war and internal troubles.

“What is being done now, Mr. Secretary?” asked Alcón, who was perfectly aware of the state of affairs, but wished to see business in the Senate resumed so as to have the matter in hand done with.

The secretary, although fatigued from so many hours of continuous work, replied nevertheless in his customary sonorous voice, reading the text of the written motion:

“The Senate considers itself sufficiently enlightened and proceeds . . . etc. . . .”

Sánchez Méndez, with a gesture of annoyance, looked to the right and left of him, seeking a means of preventing Roberto from speaking; but not discovering any feasible method of helping him out of his predicament, bent his head, and then, out of humor, threw himself back in his chair.

"You have the floor," he then said to Roberto, curtly, "but I must request the honorable Senator to be brief."

Roberto then began his speech. He spoke slowly, gravely, but in his eyes, on his lips, there was playing a spark of irony, a jocular smile, while he indulged at length in an exordium. He started out with the declaration, that in accord with his friend Alejandro, he would abstain from casting a vote, but that he believed it would be expedient and proper to elucidate a number of points on the subject of canalization of rivers, points which perhaps had not been taken sufficiently into account. It had been claimed that the Senate had been sufficiently enlightened. But he scarcely thought so. Alcón, Karlonoff, all the enemies of Ronderos changed their position on hearing this, and moved in their seats impatiently, protesting in low voices against this statement. What? They were on the point of closing the debate. Evening was approaching, and they had had four solid hours of continuous session in this stifling atmosphere. And now, when they were about to take the decisive vote on the matter, a new discussion was being announced, a long speech, merely for the purpose of delay, solely in order to wear them out, to exasperate them, now that the other side was unable to defeat them. . . . But Roberto, for one hour, for two hours, with an even voice, with a secret pleasure on noticing the impatience of his adversaries, went on with his elaborate dissertation in which he touched on nearly all the big rivers in the world, the generators of civilization, the parents of industry, and with perfect calm spoke of the mysterious Ganges, then passed on to the Nile and its fecund delta, and next to the Rhone River, which furnished him with a bright example of progress as developed by a river.

"To the question!" exclaimed the President, and in his remark could be distinctly felt his ill dissimulated rage, the wrath of disappointed hopes.

"I am illustrating the question," retorted Roberto with equanimity. "The President will admit that I am touching on new



points which are wrapped up in the motion that we are discussing now." And then he continued:

"Yes, honorable senators, on this review of facts connected with all the canalized rivers, and those which may be canalized hereafter, we must not forget the Rhone River, which has been a forerunner and exemplar of the history of civilization of western Europe. In order to throw new light on this discussion, I trust you will agree with me that it is not only useful and to the purpose, but absolutely indispensable to outline the biography of this water highway, one that carries such vast masses of water and serves so many important aims. And when I employ the word biography, I consider the term one that may fitly be applied. For it is easily demonstrable that a river is an organism, a living being, which considered both from the viewpoint of space and time, from the geographical reach of its course, and in fulfilling its historical task, with an apparent expenditure of will power and intelligence, reproduces all the vicissitudes of human life. The Rhone, so infused with the importance of its mission, as tireless as the Nile itself, and like the latter a builder of fertile land, a propagator of ideas and a cradle of various races, gathers up the heritage of the Greco-Egyptian river, and when the Nile ends its existence, the Gallo-Roman river still continues its life in the service of Progress."

"No more rivers!" . . . "We want the vote!" now shouted Landáburo from the lobby.

"The Rhone is the child of its works and the creator of its own subject territory," Roberto went on undisturbed. "When I, a few years ago, strolled through those regions, the thought occurred to me that the whole of the immense valley which it waters — cities, meadows, vineyards — all, all, is the fruit of those fecundating waters. The grand monuments of architecture which mirror themselves in its surface, the amphitheatres of Orange, the tombs of Arles, and the palaces of Avignon, were made out of rock fragments that the river many centuries ago tore from the mountains it came from, boulders and rock which the Rhone next rolled along towards regions in the south which afterwards it bound up with the life of humanity, in order that in the end these very rocks should be converted into huge building stones which in their turn would breath history and would guard the soul of the nations and the record of the centuries."

In clearly and soberly enunciating these sentences Roberto scanned with a humorous smile the faces of his opponents who, buried in their seats, let their eyes wander over the outlines of the cornices, the blue arched ceiling, the nude walls, bare as those in a Protestant house of worship. They accepted with a mute anger all these literary tirades, tirades which in themselves were so innocent and harmless, and the placidity of whose workmanship contrasted so strongly with the acerbity of the moment, so that they almost seemed a personal affront, an exasperating jest.

"Please confine yourself to the question under discussion," said Sánchez, while his hand reached out with a certain threatening movement, in the direction of his bell. "I request the honorable Senator once again to be sparing in his remarks."

"Put the Jockey-Senator out!" howled Landáburo from the lobby.

"We have so far considered this servant of mankind," continued Robert, losing not the smallest particle of his equanimity, "under but one aspect. And now, for the purpose of analogy with our own stupendous Magdalena River, and to elucidate sufficiently this whole problem, we must look at it from another point of view, from that of the actual course it pursues. All I have said, and all I am going to add to make the matter plain, connects in the most direct manner with the question of canalization, and as this most important phase of the business has not yet been considered at all, the Senate will thank me for treating it extensively. . . . The President has already perceived that if I enter into this aspect of the case it is because neither the learned Doctor Alcón, nor any other authority so far heard — and I know that nobody will or can deny this statement — has at all paid any attention to it. Nor can the whole matter be rendered sufficiently plain without going into it." And Roberto smilingly proceeded:

"Thus it would appear that Nature herself foresaw the destinies of those two great waterways, the Magdalena and the Rhone. The Rhone is born high up among the eternal glaciers, runs along through a triumphal avenue of tall obelisks of ice, leaps and dallies all around the rocks, bounds forward in cascades, is lulled to sleep in the quiet nooks of the valleys below, and shows all the enthusiasm, the caprices, the cheerfulness and

the enchanting uselessness of infancy. Then it advances a bit, and arrives before the walls of Geneva, cuts through the lake, encounters the pure waters of another river, and the volume of both streams join and for some time follow the same course, in the same bed, without mingling, the pellucid waves of the one current not losing themselves by piercing the muddy waves of the other. But in the end they do mix, become perturbed and impregnated with ooze, in which fact may be seen a symbol of the eternal combat and of the inevitable defeat in which the virginal souls are worsted by the impure souls. . . .”

“Benavides is fainting, about to die, . . . and there’s no end to this speech! . . . Victory is escaping me! . . . The thing is dragging on!” . . . This was what Sánchez Méndez was thinking to himself, while everybody else would have thought him asleep, if it had not been for the shaking of his hunched shoulders and the nervous clutch of his hands grasping the handle of his bell, ready to ring it again in a frenzy of impatience.

“This is becoming unbearable!” muttered Karlonoff.

“This is never going to finish!” exclaimed Alcón, while he was closely watching the almost lifeless Benavides, who had dropped in a faint upon his desk.

But just then Landáburo got reinforcement in the person of Socarraz, who at the head of a noisy band roughly made his way into the lobby.

And in the midst of the hot breath of fierce hatreds the brandy-flavored voice of Socarraz rose:

“Down with all the thieves of the canalization project!”

Roberto distinguished in the shadows of the lobby the face of Socarraz, smiled to himself, and without being the least disturbed by the incident continued in his speech.

“On its arrival at Lyon, this river, so abounding in its resources, just as does our own Magdalena when it has reached the Salto de Honda, changes completely its habits, its physiognomy. The child becomes a man. The Rhone now understands its real mission. It strikes out determinedly on its straight path to the sea. A useful life begins now for this river which enters upon a period of enjoyment and of labor. The river begins to show on its bosom vessels of every size and kind, and it shares in the industrial activity of the cities on its shores, and devotes itself to the agricultural toil of those same fields

which the river itself has formed with its fruitful fertilizing mud, mingled with the sands it has hurled along for great distances in the course of centuries."

"Silence! Silence!" bellowed the menacing voices of Socarraz and his followers.

Roberto looked the brawling throng in the face, waited quietly till the noise began to subside, and then went on again:

"And in thus developing its destiny into one of useful labor, one adequate to its nature, the Rhone acquires and manifests all its splendor, its majesty, and its beauty. Already its course runs through shadows, winds around islands, embraces with languid arms forests and meadows, and then flows in a straight line through a clear canal, reflecting on its way the azure of the sky, absorbing the serenity of the mornings, and in hiding at last in the sea it gleams with the ardent sun of Provence. . . ."

The irritation, the anxiety of the adversaries went on increasing, and at intervals there arrived from afar the roar and shoutings of throngs somewhere within the legislative building, the crackling of fireworks.

The shades of early evening began to invade the senatorial hall. The walnut of the wainscoting and of the desks looked already quite black. Everything took on blurred outlines. The masses of spectators in the lobby formed a shapeless dark accumulation. Beneath the heavy silk curtains of the platform where the President sat enthroned, the obscurity became palpable. And in the rear of them the eyeglasses worn by Sánchez glittered like the pupils of a wild beast in its cave. Roberto's voice sounded more and more feeble, and he asked for a glass of water. He himself, feeling tired, began to wonder whether his strength would last until the moment of General Torralba's arrival. Would he come? . . . Would perhaps that last resource in which he himself was exhausting himself prove useless? During a short pause he asked Alejandro:

"Have you recognized Don Melchor?"

"De Ávila y Castillo?"

"No, the other one."

"Alcón?"

"Neither."

And he continued, moistening his lips:

"The river, reflecting the most varied landscapes, . . ."

"No more about landscapes!" came the chorus of protests from the lobby.

"The most varied landscapes," broke out the orator again, "mimicking the wonders of Nature . . ."

A redoublement of thumpings on the benches near the steps of the flight of stairs leading out of the hall in front drowned the speaker's voice. But Roberto did not interrupt his speech. The storm of noises, however, gained in volume, until it resembled the rumblings of thunder. Allowing the storm to spend itself harmlessly, Roberto crossed his arms over his bosom, and then went on exactly where he had stopped:

"Mimicking the wonders of Nature and of history: White cities in the Dauphiny, darksome villages in the Cevennes, Roman ruins, theaters, colossal remnants of former imperial edifices devoted to gladiatorial contests, ancient tombs; huge towers of the Middle Ages that once were frowning from the brink of mighty precipices, Gothic cathedrals that bless its waters as they flow past. And this river that rushes from Geneva to Avignon, from the glacial, Protestant Rome to the poetical papal Rome, portraying with pleasure all the arts, conveying all ideas and beliefs, and which dies majestically at Arles, the latter at one time being the rival of Byzantium and almost the center of that wide world where ruled the Cæsars. . . ."

"Vote! Vote!" shouted a number of hoarse voices from the passages. Roberto drew out his handkerchief and wiped his moist forehead.

"Let him follow the dying river!" howled some others, laughing. "Let him also sail on! . . . As far as the ocean! . . . Hurry, hurry!"

"We want the vote!" the chorus in the gallery was howling back.

"It is necessary to consider the nature of this river from other points of view," said the speaker. . . .

"No! . . . No!" clamored others from out of the semi-obscurity of the session chamber.

"Yes, . . . yes, . . . let him continue," replied still other voices from the lobby, who were amused by this ceaseless bel-  
lowing.

"It is already night," exclaimed Alcón in a nervous flutter, while he still held the pulse of Benavides in his hand.

As though this remark had suggested new images to Roberto, he went on afresh with his speech:

"I have, honorable Senators, I have seen the Rhone dying where it nears its mouth, and it is there that I have observed it resemble most closely our Magdalena when emptying into the ocean most. That river which has nourished the splendid forests of centuries' growth, is now in its death throes on a miserable bed of bitter marshes, of sterile and heated sandy soil. Only the tamarisk, amidst all this poverty, that squalor and heat, brings forth pallid flowers, so pallid that they appear like a powder of sea salt deposited upon its trembling branches. The heavy waters of those dead lagoons show gray reflections, and towards sundown the yellow melancholy of the autumnal evening. And in all that vast scene there is no living motion to be seen save the fugitive shadows of the clouds, nor in that immense silence any sound but the sea storms or else the dull resonance of a village church bell which there, far away on the horizon, seems to double itself, booming out the agony of the Rhone, of that once powerful river which thus finds an inglorious end of its existence. And one feels there the peace of death, the death of an ancient toiler, who once again restores to the elements those forces which Nature endowed him with. . . ."

In the midst of the silence in which the hurried breathing of Benavides alone was audible, for he like the Rhone seemed to be dying, there was heard, far away, the whistling of a train. "Ah! Torralba! . . ." "At last!"

Such exclamations ran along the benches and seats. A pushing and shoving could be noticed among the spectators. All craned their necks to see better. Everybody looked at his neighbor. The shadows were deepening, and all fell to whispering their surmises, their impressions, interrogating each other.

Some were laughing, others were breathing hard, and the whole hall finally resounded with the roar of the entire multitude. Quite a number shrieked with anger. It was like a tempest.

"We want a vote!" Landáburu shouted over all the noise, in a fearful rage, from the lobby. "No more insipid literature! Get to a vote!"

"No more chaff! To the harvest!" some others vociferated.

“Straw and corn,” said Roberto, making a pun, and glancing at the lobby, “straw and grain, there is of both for the jockey-generals who constantly interrupt me.”

“Vote!” bawled the hundreds of rough fellows whom Socarraz had brought with him. “Vote!” And with their feet they once more set up a tremendous drumming on the floor and tables.

“I now intend to show, leaving other considerations, the influence this matter has on commerce,” said Roberto, trying to dominate his fatigue, which, nevertheless, was gaining on him. “And I meet there with a coincidence which in itself might seem puerile but which in my opinion is of the greatest importance,” he went on. “I am now going to mention a name which is linked to the future of Colombia, to the prosperity of her industry, and also attached to the life of the Rhone, and to the industries which it unfolds and nourishes. Let it not be said that I go outside the question which at present is under discussion. I am swayed solely by the wish to enlighten the Senate on this matter from every possible side, and to have the Senate convinced that even slight coincidences and almost superfluities serve to point out that Providence herself would lift up the torch of enlightenment in order to influence the mind of the Senate. One moment more of attention only, just a few additional words, and I shall conclude my speech. From its birth to its mouth of the Rhone produces in its course the most powerful element of motive force existing in France. The industry of Geneva takes from it in passing 600 horsepower, and it is scarcely noticed by the river that it has been bled to that extent. A short distance farther it moves 8000 turbines in Bellegarde. In Bellegarde, gentlemen! . . . I cannot help calling this fact to your mind. This name is united to the Magdalena, it is linked with the prosperity of our country, with that of the city whose name I just had occasion to recall; with the Rhone, with the future, the wealth of a happy nation. And Bellegarde, that town which is lit up by electric light through the energy of the waves, is the type of the city of the future. The day is not far when the other cities rising along the shores of the Rhone will imitate that example, as also our Magdalena will be the master and at its own time the servant of that whole district, the dispenser of the energy,

of the life movement, in those regions which it will dominate. And soon will come the hour when the workers, the humble people, aided by that colossal force, electricity, will say to those beneficent rivers the words which the Egyptian toiled addresses to Father Nile: 'Thou driest the tears of our eyes.'"

A great tumult in the passages was heard just then, a murmur in the lobby, which drowned Roberto's voice.

"Torralba. . . . General Torralba. . . . He is already coming!"

The noise went on increasing, until the mass of people standing under the arches at the entrance parted in two wings, and in the intervening free space, leaning on a strong staff, with carriage erect, appeared the ancient military chief of the Granadine Confederation. In the dusk of early evening were only distinguishable a pale face, a white beard that flowed over his chest. All, even his enemies, rose to their feet out of respect, while the old man, thudding the carpet with his staff, found his way towards a vacant seat. The secretary, likewise standing, formally announced the presence of General Torralba. Roberto had concluded his speech, satisfied with his success. Torralba came to occupy the place of Karlonoff, and Sánchez, although boiling with rage, rose at the old warrior's approach, seeing that now, with Karlonoff going out and Torralba coming in, there was a majority for General Ronderos. All now stood up. The oath was administered to Torralba, and the voting was proceeded with.

The law which the enemies of Ronderos had framed to ruin him, became inoperative by reason of an unexpected incident. The group of the Integros and the partisans of Landáburo let loose on their adversaries in loud abuse, and in the corridors, on the stairs, wherever the crowd was pouring, like a stream of burning and destructive lava, shouts were heard of voices made hoarse by fervent hate:

"Death to Torralba! . . . Death to General Ronderos!"



## CHAPTER XXVI

## A TELEGRAM IN CHIFFRE

THE sky rockets went on crackling and bursting; and they were answered by others, going up at divers points of the city. It was the signal agreed upon, the sinister campaign spreading from suburb to suburb, calling the people to meetings, to risings, to insurrection. The last sunbeams of the late afternoon illuminated the great square, shed their dying light upon the hostile multitude that were gathering in crowds, demonstrating and humming like a beehive.

On the appearance of Ronderos and Torralba on the porch of the Capitol, a tempest of whistles, of threatening roars burst forth.

“Death to the thieves!”

“Down with Ronderos!”

And this name of Ronderos which the agitators had taught the populace to abhor, by the magical effects of this hatred, let loose veritable hurricanes of abuse, of wrath, of inexplicable rage, of savage furor.

Socarraz lurched forward, and raised his hand against the object of all that outburst of feeling. Chispas, however, had closely followed the aggressor, and gave him such a terrific blow with his fist as to stretch out the other at full length on the pavement.

Howling, menaces, insults.

Vast throngs of people, a mob that like waves in a storm threaten to engulf their victims. The comrades of Socarraz, quite frantic, once more launch themselves upon their adversaries. But they are promptly checked. For Chispas, Alejandro, Roberto, now surround the two old gentlemen, make a powerful wall out of their bodies for their protection, and maintain themselves firmly against the hosts of their enemies, resolved to be killed or to kill rather than give way, their arms stiffened for the fight, finger on the trigger of their revolvers.

The multitude is surprised and dominated for an instant,

and opens a way, and they thus advance between menacing fists, amidst congested faces, and the mouths of all these half demented partisans are wide open, showing a snarl, teeth ready to crunch, full of froth, and vomiting curses, maledictions, blasphemies, emitting grim laughter, which in their paroxysm of ire seem to turn raucous, bestial.

And the group of valorous champions goes on steadily advancing, with a haughty and disdainful mien, with disparagement of danger in eyes, in clenched hands, in their whole attitude.

Thus they arrive at the Hotel Bicontinental, and there Ronderos at once flies to the telephone.

Borrero is taking Landáburu and Socarraz to the barracks of his men, he is told, and with his Granaderos is sweeping free the square.

But the populace nevertheless was multiplying all the time. The revolutionary wave was rising and ever rising. Masses of people in working blouse or frock coat, of those who were initiated into the real purpose of the movement, and of those who were merely curious, men lacking work, crowds of the criminally inclined or socially ostracised, or lost, all, all, in this jumble emptied from the four corners of the immense square into the inextricable hurly-burly, were swallowed up in it. And all, too, swept on and on, choked and pushed each other, seized by the political fever, infected by the microbe of revolution.

And all the while the innumerable sky rockets, flashing like lightning, crossing each other in midair, filling it with hissing and spluttering noises, with detonations and explosions, acting as messengers of the insurrection. They went up like serpents of fire, cutting the obscurity overhead, showering clots of blood-colored light upon the crowds below, and next there came a rain of sparks pouring down which seemed to inflame still further the envy of the envious, the heat of hatred, the seed that had been scattered for months and months into the soul of their readers by *La Revaluación* and *La Integridad*.

Black clouds of smoke rising in the sky were partially illuminated by fugitive flames kindled in the streets, by incendiary fires, and the whole atmosphere became impregnated with the odor of powder. From all these elements there was develop-

ing the frightful medium whence grow great crimes, a scent which enwraps, penetrates and searches out, an envenomed fluid which creeps into the blood, runs at rapid pace through the veins, beats in the heart and deadens the brain, brutalizes and renders it furious.

The apostleship of the agitators had spread with a fearful fecundity. They had infected the lower strata of society both with their poisonous doctrines and their wickedness, had brought to the surface their crop of rascality. Having taught the populace that they had been outraged and that they would enjoy abundance and leisure just as soon as they would make an end of Ronderos and Bellegarde, Alejandro and Roberto, who, they claimed, had by shameful tricks and dishonesty enriched themselves to the tune of millions upon millions, and this at the expense of public misery, devouring the very bread of the toilers, they now were acting in a spell that possessed them. Silently but tenaciously they had roused the brutal instincts, the savage passions that sleep in the soul of the people, and docile and easily yielding to temptation, swept along by the arguments of these same agitators, possessed with a rabid and dumb hatred, delirious, in a frenzy, it now launched itself into insane passion, bellowing with rage, cursing its supposed despoilers, in the throes of epileptic convulsions, smelling the odor of blood, feeling the impulse to indulge in senseless noise and riot, the magical call to assassination and deeds of rapine, the voluptuous satisfaction of destruction, the desire for demolition, the pleasure of clamorous demonstrations.

Landáburo, standing upon a table, was haranguing the multitude in his trumpet voice:

“These dark and secret institutions which we for twenty years past have been fighting with patriotic fervor, are now beginning to exercise their noxious influence in society, and their fatal result is the immolation of the sons of the people, of the humble and honest workmen.”

And with a tragic gesture he pointed to Socarraz, scarcely recovered from the knockout so lately administered, and who still was lying half forgotten on the ground.

“In these present hours the blood-soaked history of liberty is repeating itself,” went on Landáburo, “the history of martyrdom and of the extermination of democracy and we who

have been the sufferers for many years are now dealing out vigorous blows which will induce the people to choose the road of Revaluation. For this purpose, too, I have all along consecrated my pen to the popular weal; for this I send forth my words of fire, repeating in your ears the conviction that nobody has the right to the superfluous while anybody else may suffer for the want of the indispensable, and that the history of the nobles is the martyrdom of the poor and needy. . . . The people to-day want justice done. Public opinion, the queen of the social world, the vox populi heard from the days of the prophet Samuel to this day, suffices in lieu of mere physical lynching. But why? Because public opinion is the expression of the sovereign people. And when this sovereign wants and commands something, this something, even if it be the death of Socrates or the sacrilegious crucifixion of the great reformer of Judea, must be accomplished."

Here Landáburo was rewarded by frantic applause. He wiped his perspiring brow, smiled and then continued:

"There are members of the cabinet who are like jackals, who live by devouring the corpse of this agonizing Republic. Yes, Ronderos and his friends are vultures who stretch their bare necks out and plunge their insatiable bill of steel into the empty stomach of the country and gorge themselves by eating up the entrails and the brain.

"But this government has been notified that public opinion is aroused, and it is in vain that, in order to escape its fall, it now offers us leagues."

He took a moment's respite, and then, raising his voice until it acquired a more penetrating character, so that it echoed from the galleries as far as the Cathedral, he exclaimed:

"Compatriots, leagues serve only the purpose of mending torn stockings."

Borrero approached the spot where Landáburo was holding forth, and said to him:

"Doctor Landáburo, you are my prisoner."

And the other, glad to see himself the object of a measure which would surely cause his name to resound throughout the whole Republic, and give him new claims on the consideration of his party, lending him the halo of the martyr, allowed himself to be taken without a murmur, carrying his head high

between the bayonets of a file of soldiers who were taking him to their barracks.

"To the government palace!" a number of voices began to shout now, and the multitude obediently rushed off in that direction.

González Mogollón, who was going from group to group, counseling moderation and calm, succeeded in making his voice heard above the clamor of the cheering and the denunciations.

"I am going to talk to the President," he said. "Just a moment. Wait for me here, all of you. I am going to arrange this."

A hush fell on the blatant crowd. There was a time spent in nervously awaiting the result, and at the end of it one of the balconies of the palace was opened, and there could be heard anew the humming of the bumble-bee:

"Friends! The President of the Republic is at this moment conferring with the president of the Senate. Everything is being arranged."

"Long life to the President! . . . Long life to Sánchez Méndez! Death to Ronderos!" shouted the multitude.

After the calm, the populace returned to the task of amusing itself; the sound of its own noise was intoxicating it, was pushing it on to excesses, to destruction, and one group of these demonstrators approached the gates of the government palace with hostile intent, but Borrero, at the head of the guards, ordered his men to use their bayonets, and actually proceeded to clear the way. His attack on the crowd resulted in a number of persons being wounded, and there was much noise and disorder. The pavement of the back street was reddened with blood, and for a second time the huge bald head of González Mogollón became visible on one of the balconies of the palace.

"Friends! Comrades!" he called down, "I can settle everything satisfactorily. Doctor Alcón has just been named minister of finances, charged also with the interim conduct of the war department."

Sánchez Méndez, Alcón, Karlonoff, one after the other, appeared on the balconies, were acclaimed with great energy, greeted as victors, and then the multitude dispersed and went

on their way to the suburbs, where they wetted their patriotism with numerous libations. Sánchez Méndez took his way to the apartments of the President of the Republic.

"As I had before declared to your Excellency," he said, "Ronderos is the sole obstacle in the way of a lasting peace. His leaving the cabinet would bring about the most perfect calm. The unfortunate personage, merely to render himself indispensable, has kept your Excellency and the country in a perpetual state of alarm. But there is no cause for fear, no reason for alarm. With a couple of hundred soldiers," he concluded, launching above his eyeglasses a smiling glance, "with some two hundred brave soldiers the government is perfectly able to maintain the public peace and order."

Thus Pedro Alcantara Ronderos fell from power and was forced to retire to private life.

On the day following, leaving time to communicate to Ronderos his nomination to the post of ambassador in Vienna and Stockholm (not accepted by him), Alcón took possession of the same department whence he had been recently so ignominiously ejected for his black treason. At last! . . . Here he was, in this handsome room, where everything seemed still to resound with the manly accents of Ronderos' voice. Now it was no longer he, Alcón, who would have to wait humbly on the yellow sofa watching the minister until he might raise his head and stretch out his hand for a bundle of letters or papers. Now he himself, modest Alcón, could seat himself, if he felt disposed, in that wide and comfortable armchair upholstered in Utrecht velvet, there, before the big table, between the electric button which made employees appear like a flash, panting with eagerness, and the inkstand, which in being used by his powerful hand could with a single stroke of the pen render happy or unhappy so many poor dependents on his favor. At last he had "arrived!" Voluptuously he stretched his limbs in that same huge chair, sighed as though he had just climbed to the top of a steep mountain, then got up again, and with the stride of a conqueror began to cross and recross in every direction this spacious office, as though the sound of his foot-fall ought to be heard within the whole circumference of the Republic. He wanted to have some palpable token of his new

dignity, perform some act of immediate authority. He touched the button and instantly there appeared on the threshold Don Cosme Oramas.

"Tell them," he issued his order in a tone of voice that Don Cosme had never heard before, "that I shall not be in for anybody just now, . . . for nobody, you understand!"

And with a haughty, slow, and unutterably dignified motion he pointed Don Cosme to the door.

Yes, he was now the head of this great department. He had just read it in those timid eyes, in the bow which just now had bent the spinal column of Don Cosme Oramas. Yes, he was now minister, and in the future, bankers, proud owners of haciendas, people of consequence, all the cream of society, would have to wait his convenience in the passages outside, only too glad if he should permit them to come here, if he should let them sit down over there, in that yellow sofa in the corner, greatly honored if he with a slight gesture, without taking first the trouble to write, should allow them to come within his presence; not too close, no, but just in that heavy big Russia leather chair, which for over a year nobody who was not at least a count had occupied, And with ministerial unction, so hard to acquire, with the heightened feeling of his new position, he could already see in his mind's eye the smiling and obsequious look of those come to solicit favors, while he, with a vague gaze, as though lost in the abyss of his own thoughts, listened to their timid, stammering phrases:

"Mr. Minister . . . kindly excuse me . . . Señor Doctor, will your honor please permit me to . . . Señor Don Melchor, may I tell you that . . . Señor Minister, I am taking the liberty to . . ."

And he, pen in hand raised ready for use, without turning his head, his gaze in the distance, would answer with a smile quite affably disdainful:

"All right . . . we shall not delay the matter . . . we shall consult on it. . . . Impossible. . . . This does not concern my department. . . . Please come back some other day. . . . I am very sorry. . . ."

Ah! and this Canalization contract which he had only the night before fought in the Senate,— he would now be able by a wise combination of ministerial resolutions to put the finishing

strokes to it, enwrapping the concessionaires in a veritable spider's web. And by throwing to the dust heap this very contract, how much his own frame as a man of inflexible character, of unassailable rectitude, would grow! Ah, what supreme bliss, to seize upon the deposit of a million francs, to break Roberto, to ruin and humiliate him, this obstructionist dandy, who had been in his way on the path to triumph . . . an obstructionist in the Senate, an obstructionist in his own wooing of the daughter of Montellano. . . . "No, now Montellano will force her to marry me. . . . I'll have him here, trembling, under my feet, depending on a stroke of my pen."

Agitated, fatigued by this accumulation of thoughts, pursued by the phantoms of his own ambition, he went to the window and cast a compassionate glance down on the square below, and there, way down, he saw men scarcely larger than ants, excitedly running about, way below on the pavement, indulging in pitiable anxieties, and he allowed his glance to roam the vast horizon. He felt in himself an irrevocable mission to command, to lead and shepherd men, vaguely longing for something more and greater, thinking that many heads of states had started on their road upwards from much farther down. To his memory came the vision of that row of portraits in the huge antechamber of the Senate, those bosoms crossed by the broad tricolored ribbons. He admired himself in his dress coat. How well he would look with that striped silk ribbon across the chest! And lost in his dream floating on the high sea of ambition, he saw himself already installed in the palace of San Carlos beneath the baldachin of yellow silk, with a malicious smile such as he had noticed on those old portraits, receiving the representatives of foreign sovereigns who greeted him as their "great and good friend." . . . "Most excellent Señor." . . . "Permit me in the name of his most wise Majesty to salute the Government and people of this Nation, and more especially its worthy President, the most excellent Señor Don Melchor Alcón, known beyond the seas." . . . "President Melchor Alcón!" "The Alcón Administration." . . . How well that sounded!

With a vibrant step he resumed his pacing up and down, but suddenly he felt a struggle for the electric button at his door, and from outside there came the sound of formidable



blows, of imperative voices. Alcón shuddered as having almost been caught *in flagrante*, then rushed to the door, and opened it with a ferocious aspect. And then there presented himself, filling the whole entrance, Sánchez Méndez.

"Hello! Comrade!" he shouted, stepping into the office as though it were his own. "I have vanquished every one of your sentinels. I have come to give you a hug of welcome and felicitation!"

Alcón remained passive, his arms hanging loose down the length of his body. It was necessary that each and every one should occupy his respective place. He at once put in practice what he had just been doing in imagination. He stretched himself luxuriously in his huge armchair, put on the look worn by those ancient portraits, and with a slight gesture he indicated to Sánchez Méndez a position, over there, not too close to himself, in the black Russia leather armchair.

"See here, Alcón!" said Sánchez, and the chair creaked as he took his seat. "See here, Doctor Alcón," he continued with a certain air of embarrassment and pique, "I believe it to be my duty to remind you of our principles, those of the band of Integros, the confession of faith of our circle, for the moment has come to put the concessions, the compromises and the prospects into practice, and . . ."

But he halted. Alcón, with a vacant gaze into space, seemed not to hear him at all. And, at last, with a smile full of amiable disdain, he made reply:

"We shall consult about this. . . . It does not concern my department. . . . I am very sorry. . . ."

The other, disconcerted for an instant, insisted:

"It is necessary, Melchor. . . . Señor Minister, it is indispensable to make radical changes in the financial department, according to what we have promised the country in *La Integridad*, your honor and I myself. And for this nothing is more natural than to make new appointments, to gather together our friends, those who have sacrificed themselves."

But Alcón, always with that empty look, as though lost in the abyss of his own thoughts, merely murmured:

"Later. . . . We shall not fail to consider this promptly. . . ."

Sánchez Méndez, now angry, and seeing that his disciple was trying to emancipate himself, attempted his last effort. He un-

buttoned his walking coat, drew from it some papers, a whole immense plan of financial changes, and started to read. . . .

"Point I (a). Conversion of the Debt."

But Alcón stopped him, extended one rigid hand towards the manuscript, and with his eyes said:

"Please pass this to me . . ."

He then took the essay, glanced it over in silence, and finally folded it up, making the folds as tight as though he never meant to unfold the document again, and then stamping it with a green glass stamp.

"It is well," he then said curtly. "I shall pass it on to the section chief . . . he'll study it at his own time . . . we are not going to delay the matter."

Sánchez Méndez emitted a tremendous snort, unbuttoned his coat once more, quite solemnly, rose with indignation, but subsequently collected himself, and held out his hand.

"Dear Alcón," he then said in a subdued voice, "Señor Minister, I am taking my leave. . . . I have some experience, and I have pledged this office. Do not forget that you have in me an adviser . . . even more, a friend."

Alcón meanwhile was seeing him to the door, until the tall and robust person of Sánchez Méndez, who made everything once more shake and tremble under his heavy tread, had disappeared in the adjoining office.

Alcón called out. Don Cosme once more appeared.

"I wish to repeat to you that there will be no more audiences," said Alcón, altogether in his best ministerial accent. Don Cosme went off to transmit this order, and passing from office to office, from desk to desk, repeated like an echo:

"There will be no audience! Remember, no audiences."

And in all the offices, most of them already empty, the employees now gave themselves up to their favorite occupations.

Don Cosme threw an alarmed glance at the clock on the wall, laid his pen aside, and rubbing his hands, said:

"Well, well, . . . it's half past two . . . the hour for my milk."

He went to a little stand, and returned. He majestically placed the cup upon his desk, upon a piece of cut paper, put the points of his mustache aside, spread the ends of his napkin

out with care, and then steeped his spongy biscuit in the milk. At the neighboring tables there was one employee who was reading *La Revaluación*, and another was lazily trimming his nails with a pen knife.

But Montellano now invaded the antechambers, and at the risk of a severe reprimand, Don Cosme, obsequious and humble, leaving his milk and biscuits for a moment, accompanied the millionaire to the office, somewhat in fear that the non-fulfilment of those strict orders might involve him in trouble. But he was an old fox, and knew up to what point those orders were to be carried out.

Hearing the heavy steps of Montellano, and the roar of his voice, Alcón in a twinkling had thrown himself in his armchair, and then assumed all the gravity peculiar to him. But Montellano crossed the office with precipitation, took hold of Alcón's cold hands, shook them forcibly and familiarly, and then said:

"Now at last we have a real minister of finance!"

Alcón with a slight movement of his head assigned the Russia leather armchair to him.

Montellano then went on pointing out the chief purpose of his visit, but Karlonoff came in at this juncture, and putting a roll of documents on the table, remarked:

"Here you have the complete plans of the attack."

Alcón did not at once understand, and was blinking with his small short-sighted eyes.

"The plan of attack . . . for . . ." he muttered.

Karlonoff held back. He did not know whether he might talk frankly before him.

"Oh, yes, the one about the Canalization," burst out Alcón.

"Exactly! I have studied the point according to my own method, which nothing can resist, and with that series of resolutions we shall smash the whole contract, we shall overwhelm them, drive them to desperation, oblige them to disgorge the deposit. . . . The defeat of yesterday is a great victory. We shall lose in the legislature and regain all in the executive branch. Ah, ah, nothing, there is nothing like having the executive on your side."

"Very well," interrupted Alcón, "hand that bunch of docu-

ments to the section chief. You know in order to let them see clear in the matter. . . . When Congress adjourns, we shall begin our own side of it. The President has promised me that there will be no prorogation."

"That will by no means do," exclaimed Montellano, as soon as Karlonoff had disappeared. "Permit me to speak with frankness."

Alcón frowned, contracted his eyes and closed his lips severely. But Montellano went on in his domineering voice:

"Quite the contrary, you must do quite the contrary. You must lend your aid to the canalization enterprise, give full publicity to what has been done and to what remains to be done; you must demonstrate by what time vessels of deep draught may enter by the Bocas de Ceniza, which will soon be the case—they say by the first of January; then the railroad from la Sabanilla will become worthless and useless, and then it will be my turn, and I shall buy it . . . as I have some time ago explained to you, according to what we have agreed upon . . ."

"But I cannot carry out this operation without fulfilling all the formalities in that case provided, and until all the fiscal conditions which the law stipulates have been complied with to the last letter," said Alcón, assuming a very important and dignified air.

"Allowing that," replied Montellano, "here is the railroad which will be disposed of by public sale, with the burden of immense charges, and whenever you want it. Let them make all the noise they want to, complying with all the conditions you may impose, . . . I assure you that I shall offer for that road more than anybody else. . . . Don't let me miss this . . . I shall pay for this on good terms, on very good terms . . ."

"Very well, Señor Montellano. . . . I am going to study the points involved . . . always unforeseen circumstances excepted, I shall fix to-morrow the terms for the sale of this property,—public sale, of course, and with at least ninety days intervals."

"But let it be at least before the first of January, because after that date I shall be in Ubaque. . . . There we shall await things. . . . Aura and Dolores have commissioned me . . ."

He became silent, because he recognized in the corridor outside the voice of Landábuero, who came in his rough soldier's manner to ask a hearing.

Before Landábuero entered Montellano had slipped away, and our hero burst out with:

"I came to see you, friend, to render you once again my thanks for my restored liberty." While speaking he was inhaling with delight that peculiar ministerial perfume from which, alas, he had been separated for many years. "I am here, esteemed Doctor, to thank you for my freedom. But in order that your work be complete, I have another favor to beg of you . . . a little more."

"A little more? What is it?" queried Alcón, mistrustful. He felt himself already a part of the Government, and was beginning to distrust the revolutionary with whom he had walked arm in arm in the foyer of the theater. It would be necessary to hold back in time, to forget old promises, even though the Revaluation forces should declare him a convert to the policy of the "closed door."

"Yes, my friend and Doctor, I want you to issue to me through the war department a passport allowing me to leave the capital."

"A passport? . . . In time of peace?"

Landábuero, who now perceived that he had gone too far, added instantly:

"I am thinking of absenting myself from the country . . . after surveying it, of course, and there is nothing else on my mind. On the other hand, even when you guarantee our rights ever so much, the police spies whom that inquisitor, Ronderos, has all over, might embarrass my line of march. It is necessary for me to travel, to put all my faculties to practical use. I am stifling here. A man like myself requires the free air of the American pampas.

Alcón drew breath. This would in no wise compromise him. Besides, it would be a relief to have Landábuero far away, to get rid of him. But he carefully recorded his request, and then assumed his studied attitude, became grave and solemn, with his glance far away, and murmured the Sybilline phrases:

"We shall see . . . we shall deliberate the matter."

"Doctor, . . . Mr. Minister," interrupted the other with great insistence, with anxiety, "you dare not deprive me of the sacred right of free locomotion." And then, approaching Alcón familiarly, while the latter backed away from him:

"This journey of mine will be undertaken in your own interest; I shall utilize it making propaganda for you. . . . Only break with the policy of the closed door, and you will have the support of my comrades. Remember what we have been talking about formerly. . . . Let us give our ideals new values."

"But, General, did you not last night speak against the leagues?"

"Ah, Doctor — Mr. Minister," said Landáburo, breaking out in hearty laughter, "that is my evil genius, my little joke that now and then plays me a trick. There are leagues and leagues. We shall make a frank appeal to the country by means of a convention which will recognize all the rights of freemen. In a word, you are too intelligent to misunderstand. You might become anything, with all and for all. You do not belong to those who have denied us during the past decade everything, water, bread, salt, and the title of brothers."

Then, in a firmer voice, in an almost threatening manner, he added:

"Did you last night hear the complaints of the people? . . . The wind is bearing hither sinister laments, and also shrieks of those who are being strangled on the crossroads of existence. . . . Redeem us, become our man and you will be the natural leader in an evolutionary movement. If you will but open the road for us, the one between those two mountains of mutual hatreds that separate the two camps, as I have told Sánchez Méndez so many times, and such a movement would lift you to the very heights of the palace of . . ."

"Enough, General, . . . hm, hm! . . . I aspire to nothing," the new minister interrupted, in a trembling, timorous voice, greatly dreading the terrible indiscretions of Landáburo. But then he turned around to take another look at his waistcoat, and tried to improve on the phrase, leave a good impression on the mind of this guerilla chief, and went on with his false

smile, while his bald head underwent rapidly change after change, from the deep carmine of pride and excitement to the pallor of fright.

"I long indeed to repair those injustices, to open the path of which Sánchez and I have spoken so often in *La Integridad*," Alcón remarked. But then, in order not to go too far, and not to compromise himself, he threw back his body, lifted his hand, and touched the electric button on the wall. "I am going to give you your passport."

And on the appearance of a clerk, he said: "Take this card to the war department. Good-by, General; we shall see each other again . . . and confer . . . I am waiting."

"And this also," added Alcón, making a gesture to Landáburo to delay his departure.

He sat down, and wrote quickly:

"It is hereby ordered to change the command of the Granaderos and to examine into the conduct of Borrero during the recent events . . . in your prison, General, I mean."

Gacharnah, who had been at a wedding, away from the capital, met Landáburo on the stairs, the latter making the steps ring with his satisfaction at the turn things had taken. The fop glanced at the general with surprise at finding him there, and hastened his step toward the finance department. There he questioned the clerk who was still absorbed in the reading of *La Revaluación*, wherein Landáburo had described his confinement in the barracks of los Granaderos.

"The Señor Minister can be seen?" asked Gacharnah.

But the other went on reading without replying.

". . . From my dark cell I could see through the window on the north side, the corner of the street which in a spirit of grim irony has been called Ayacucho Street. From the other window, in an easterly direction, I enjoyed a view of the door of a tavern: 'To the Bridge of Boyacá,' where there is,—oh! irony of liberty,—to be discovered a modest nursery, kept by a daughter of General Santander's cook. . . ."

"Does the Señor General happen to be much occupied?"

The clerk, smiling cunningly, was not to be disturbed in his reading, as follows:

". . . I went to bed at a quarter to ten, according to directions affixed in my quarters. While I took off my coat, I re-

called the fact that it was Saturday, and mentally I addressed this malediction to Ronderos: Jesuit and Reverend Father Ronderos, while I see myself forced to retire to bed at ten o'clock and something earlier, you are with your friends and with some old devout person at your Saturday party, relishing a cup or two of chocolate, followed by the indispensable prayers which the monks command. . . . Finally, I lay down in the bed, a French bed 1 meter and 80 centimeters in length and 90 centimeters in width. I rose early, went to the mirror and contemplated my face, the face of a patriot, livid and disheveled by just one night of imprisonment."

"Have you finished?" insinuated Gacharnah, in a honeyed voice, and with a tinge of irony.

But the other continued undisturbedly:

"Through the window on the southern exposure I saw a company of the Granaderos, firing upon and aiming at a figure fastened to a sign board. How unfortunate, I exclaimed, that this mannikin is not the same Ronderos in person and that one of these Catholic dunces does not cut short his vital cord."

"Now, if you could tell me," insisted Gacharnah, "whether General Ronderos will receive me?"

The reader, with a rather disrespectful smile, retorted:

"There is no general of any kind here, nobody of the name of Ronderos."

"Well, then, who — which is the minister?"

"The Señor Doctor Alcón," said the clerk in a reverential tone, inclining his head.

Gacharnah stared about him quite stupidly. The tint of his chubby cheeks went from pink to purple, from purple to the hue of poppy. Then, lightly slapping the table with gloves that were the shade of raw meat, he gracefully wheeled on his heels, shot down the broad stairs, crossed the square and the streets, exhibiting his paunch with pride, while his face was full of content, turning over in his imagination schemes and plans in which millions and millions were filing past, and bolts of blue and red cloth were racing before his vision. He arrived at the telegraph office, and causing the point of his pen to scratch weirdly, he wrote:



*Gacharnah Brothers, Birmingham.—Giant. Bearded. Judaizing.*  
GACHEARNAH.

## CHAPTER XXVII

## THE RIVER

THE river, narrowed between two immense rocks, rushes roaring and in turbulent, foaming masses, spume above spume, through its constricted bed, leaps in a cascade, falls boldly, and then spreads out boiling into a vast pool of azure hue, along the borders of which a heap of withered leaves and orange flowers are scattered thickly, the soft wind having swept these from the orange grove growing along the river bank. Red and white petals fringe the stagnant backflow of the pool, turn slowly on the surface of the tepid water towards the cascade, are halted on the way in certain spots, escape the spouting current, then whirl into it again, and in patches are lost between the large stones. Sometimes some single flower is caught by a ripple, twirls about aimlessly, adorns the pool with its beauty for moments, adheres to an inviting place along the shore, as though fleeing death, and at last meets shipwreck, leaving behind a vague regret.

The republic is enjoying calm,—a calm which seems to have become more assured since General Ronderos abandoned his share in the Government. The Integros Party, now appeased, is holding the best offices in the war and finances departments. Landáburo is still traveling in the interior of the country, and is no more spoken of just now than are the partizans of Revaluation. Quite alone *La Integridad*, which is still under the management of Sánchez Méndez, is striking discordant notes amid the general concert, advocating the formation of a new party, and aiming its arrows at Alcón since the latter has become a member of the cabinet. Roberto has not returned to bring the books of Montellano since he had his accident on Corpus Christi Day, but instead attends to the business of the great enterprise in Bogotá, and Alejandro, once Congress has adjourned, and after a short stay up the Magdalena, has gone to Ubaque to pass in that place of cool winds a period of complete repose.

December has come with its azure skies, with its cheerful and luminous days, with vivifying clear lights, so admirably adapted to banish all cares and burdens, and so fitted for rejoicing during the coming holidays.

The two friends, stretched out in the shade of the plantation of plane trees at the border of the pool, are enjoying the perfumes with which the breeze is laden, slumbering under the influence of the silky friction of the leaves, and submerge themselves in the drowsy peace of this woodland spot.

"How nice it is to rest here after those four months of agitation in Congress, and those tumultuous street scenes!" exclaimed Alejandro. "Only cast a glance about you, you might continue your obstructionist speech on the Rhone, or add a new fragment on the river Ubaque."

"Just so, I might add that the harmonious sound of the river drowns the vociferations of the crazed crowds; that its rushing flow destroys the unpleasant memory of the Landáburos and Alcóns; that in this solitary place here, perfumed by that breeze, refreshed by this cascade, I feel happy, invincible, forgetful of all causes for worry and care. . . . Doubtless the best part of memory is to forget . . . especially if this river here helps one to forget."

"Good, in this wild and pleasant nook let us forget not alone all politics, but also all about the Canalization project, about letters of exchange, and about printed proofs. . . . Here there is no place where one wants to do ought but enjoy this wonderful zephyr which caresses the cheek like the soft hand of a woman, where the eye meets only butterflies that are flowers in flight, and flowers that resemble sleeping butterflies, as Doña Aura would say."

"How much Bellegarde would enjoy himself here! Listen to this symphony played by a grand orchestra, to these low notes, to the thunders of the waterfall, the tones both sweet and reposeful of the pool over there; those are the accompanying instruments, and then, in that other part of the orchestra, the leading instruments: hear how these strains are rejoicing over the plunge of the water from the pool, when each drop changes into a globule of shining silver; listen to the chorus of deep basses, of baritones and charming sopranos which all mingle and jointly produce this glory in the plenitude of wilderness

harmony; just hear the magnificat that grand musician sings, this river forever embellished with festoons and crowned with orange blossoms."

"Apotheosis, triumph, magnificat, hymn of glory?—" exclaimed Alejandro, becoming suddenly thoughtful and ruminative. "No, Roberto. You are now thinking of these rills of clear water, of those pleasant feminine pettings, . . . and I was thinking of those promises of blissful love here, which came true for other generations and at times past and gone; of the sound of torrents tumbling and roaring, which with the accompaniment of their rushing uproar invited to confidence. I was thinking of the conflict with hands furtively stretched out on this grassy site, and of the laughter on fresh faces which were reflected in this pool. And love, confidences, smiles, they all have passed away: the idylls have vanished, the happy couples have aged, the mouths which showed such charming smiles in those remote years, they have all disappeared never to return, with an abominable grin, to lie in a corner of the cemetery. . . . That music you dreamed of is weeping for the springs gone and forgotten, for extinguished youth, for eternal absence; the river intones a requiem for all the idylls, a *de profundis* for dead happiness. All this passes, vanishes, dies,—does not satisfy me. . . . There is an immense distance between the void of my heart and the love that I so much longed for. There lies an infinitude of space between what I am and that which I ought to be."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the voice of Doctor Miranda close by, and he himself appeared between two gigantic rocks.

"Hello! Where do you come from?" said Roberto. "You come in a torn cassock. . . . How do you like this mountain air, and how is your health? Is it better? Are your household troubles over? . . . Did you hear us?"

"Yes, I heard the last sentence," replied Doctor Miranda, seating himself on a rock beside Alejandro. "Very well, Alejandro. You speak very wisely. But that does not astonish me. 'There lies an infinitude of space between what I am and that which I ought to be. . . .' That is you all over. In the absence of Agüeros do you want me to make a diagnosis, Alejandro? You are the victim of your own illusions. You wish for a degree of bliss on this earth much

greater than is possible in this transitory world. Your longings, your desires are vaster than your being. . . . What you said just now is an argument in favor of immortality. It is our headstrong nature which rebels when it is denied. You are, if you two will permit me a pulpit phrase in this primitive nook, a sort of Hebrew Samson, who pulls himself erect and with his shoulders lifts the gates of his prison."

They remained in silence. Nothing was audible save the thunder of the waterfall. But above the cauldron of spume there passed a shadow; they lifted their heads and followed with their eyes an eagle which, bathing himself in the azure of the heavens, floated far above, moving his wings slowly, then rose, steadily looking in the sun, and at last fled towards the west, crossing the mountain chain.

Doctor Miranda put his hand upon Alejandro's shoulder, and in an affectionate voice remarked:

"Dear Alejandro, you are a caged eagle."

Roberto, Alejandro and Doctor Miranda, refreshed and invigorated by a bath, and followed by Perucho who carried their bathing sheets, took a path along the mountain side, which led to the village, and on their way they met Montellano who, with his bathing clothes slung over his shoulder, was on his way to take a bath. The millionaire requested Roberto to accompany him for some distance because he had to speak to him, and Alejandro and Doctor Miranda continued their walk towards the settlement.

"Friend Roberto," said Montellano, with the pride of a sportsman, "I have discovered this small path which is much shorter to the river than the other."

He had really created for himself the illusion of having opened a new path across the mountains, and he flourished his staff to right and left, as though it were a hatchet. He slashed into the waving reeds, cut off the stalks of the growing plants, made the flowers of the convolvulus fly about.

When they arrived at the pool, Montellano pulled off his sack coat and threw it on a spot overgrown with weeds, fanned himself with the flap of his straw hat, wiped off his perspiration, and bracing himself, turned his glittering small eyes upon Roberto.

"We must speak of an important matter," he remarked.

"Let me know what it is, Don Ramón."

"Friend Roberto, you probably know that Doctor Alcón will arrive here this afternoon from Bogotá."

"I did not know it."

"He is going to confer with me about a matter which is of great interest to me."

"I am listening," answered Roberto, with haughty and sarcastic indifference.

Montellano became silent, hesitated, threw a glance at the river with some sign of uneasiness, and then, snorting vehemently, turned towards Roberto.

"All right, let me be plain. We ought to understand each other, friend Ávila. I shall talk to you in confidence. We have to speak without subterfuge. It is a serious matter. Do you want me to speak out or not?"

Roberto, with his smile of delicate scorn, his hands in his pocket, made a slight movement with his shoulders which might have been taken as a gesture of assent.

"Good," continued Don Ramón. "I always like to treat things frankly, to take the bull by the horns. I am going to speak plainly. Doctor Alcón, the able member of the cabinet, is coming here to-day. He has for some time been an admirer of my daughter Dolores."

"I see."

"He is, like myself, a man who comes quickly to the point."

"I see."

"And he is coming here to get an answer, yes or no, between to-day and to-morrow."

"I see."

Montellano, noticing Roberto's sarcastic tone, and the cold and scornful smile which played around his lips, lost his self-assurance. After another silence, he began to fan himself anew with his hat, and went on:

"Well, no, the thing is not quite so simple. That is, I do not know for certain whether Dolores . . . that is, whether Doctor Alcón . . . Well, you understand me, don't you?"

"Not entirely."

Facing Roberto's scornful smile, Montellano began to lose his temper. But he succeeded in remaining calm on the

surface, wiped his abundant perspiration from his forehead, his neck and skull, gave his eyes an affectionate expression, and to his voice a wheedling, almost plaintive one.

"See here, my friend, I must think of my child's future. I have to be both father and mother to her. As for Aura, she does not come into question in this business. All right. I do not have to tell you that I like Doctor Alcón: a practical man, one with fine prospects, and also one of great influence. I will not waste time on such details; the important thing for me is . . . is . . ."

"Is yourself?"

"Myself? All right, yes, myself. I want Doctor Alcón to marry Dolores. That would suit me. But speaking to you entirely in confidence, I will say that it is now a year ago, to be precise, a year all but ten days, for to-day is the 30th of December, yes, sir, since we met you at *El Consuelo* for the first time. It is now a year that you have been fluttering like a butterfly around Dolores . . . and this is not quite proper and suitable either for Dolores and myself, nor even for yourself. I can understand it if she has a certain attraction for you. The case is simply this, that inasmuch as you have no serious intentions, whereas Doctor Alcón has, you might help me disabuse Dolores."

Roberto felt piqued, kept silent, and in his face there was again to be read an expression of delicate scorn, and he repeated the same movement with his shoulders which Montelano, with his ingrained lack of tact, took to mean approval.

"See here, Roberto," he said, therefore, "you have influence with her, you might advise Dolores, help her to decide, show her Alcón's worth."

"I'll do it," was his reply. "Be easy, I'll do it this very evening."

"Good, good, very good. I see, as you put it. I see that, after all, we two are made to understand each other, and . . ."

"Ah, you must excuse me, Don Ramón. To that I cannot at all agree. 'Made to understand each other?'" Roberto repeated after him, bursting into a fit of hearty laughter. "No, you must excuse me. We shall never understand each other. We speak two different languages, and we belong to two opposite races. I am neither inferior nor superior to you. The

point is that we are of different species. Each of us has a different idea of life itself. For me mankind is made up of two groups: artists and savages. For you it also consists of two classes: poor and rich. You disdain what I admire, and I value very little what you think so much of. We live, in fact, on two different planets. For you the external struggle, the heaping of money, capital as father and interest as son, the check, the document, the stocks, the letter of exchange, the commercial code; for me the internal struggle, reflection, dreams, the artistic line, color, expression, disinterest, the proof sheet, the code of honor. . . . And these differences are irremediable. They are differences that come down from far off," went on Roberto, becoming more and more animated, letting fly those words which had been imprisoned for long in his throat. "I, I a descendant, and remember, I say, a descendant, of an imaginative and dreamy race, a race that for many, many years was always seeking death in Spain, a useless death, one that brought no advantage, during the wars against the Moors, a race that conquered Granada, that went afterwards to America to help civilize an unknown world; a race of dreamers, a race made to love, and if you will, a Quixotic race. . . . And you, the ascendant, and mark well that I say, ascendant, of a new branch, are of to-day,—self-made,—a son of your own achievements, your own efforts, which is a merit. You go onwards, while I go backwards. We meet each other for a moment on the highroad, and we exchange greeting. But we do not understand each other, and as we are traveling in opposite directions, we bid each other good-by, we are separated by a greater and greater distance each saying to the other: till never again!"

And turning his shoulder around, whistling the well-known air from *Carmen*, he strode hastily off through the cane plantation.

Montellano remained alone. He did not understand much of what Roberto had meant by his declamation, but, after all, saw with satisfaction that he had succeeded in his proposition: to separate this young man from his daughter,—this irreparable dreamer,—so that he would no longer pursue his object like an irresponsible butterfly of the air, and decide the situation, once for all, in favor of Doctor Alcón, a safe man, bold and

not squeamish in his means, the man with whom a mysterious bond united him, with whom he was able to expand, to whom he might confide his combinations and schemes without the risk of an aggressive issue. . . . With him, yes. With him there was no danger of being misunderstood. They both felt allied by the ties of similar tastes, they both belonged to the same species.

And with the aim of meeting Doctor Alcón when he should arrive from Bogotá,—his future son-in-law, as he kept on reminding himself gaily,—he had gone to the bath, so that he might stop him when crossing the bridge that spanned the waterfall. And in order to be busy at something useful while awaiting his coming he took from the pocket of his sack coat a bundle of papers and began to study them, without paying attention to the sun which roasted his back, nor to the overpowering light which struck his pages.

A cloud of butterflies fluttered around him, and one of them sat down for rest and meditation on his bundle of papers. Montellano smashed it by a rough slap of his hand, and with a grunt blew away the gold that had settled from the crushed wings. Then behind him, overhead, he felt the bridge trembling and shaking. At last! It was Doctor Alcón with a whole train of his employees from the department.

"Doctor Alcón!" he shouted. "Doctor! Here you are! Get off your beast; dismount! Join in a bath!"

They had now come up. Alcón who had just traversed the wilderness with its damp, had his eyeglasses misty with his own breath, and was blinking and dazzled by exposure to the blinding sun. He dismounted amidst moans and complaints, tied his white mule himself to the trunk of an orange tree. His animal showed on its back the sweat-flecked reins and a layer of gray dust.

"The hour for my milk!" exclaimed Don Cosme Oramas.

He looked to one side, as though seeking instinctively the wall clock in his office. He drew out a bottle and a glass from a small bag, a supply of biscuits from another pocket, then poured out the milk, and with delight began to soak the spongy cake.

The animals started to graze in the shade of the trees or else rolled on the ground and squealed luxuriously on the grass.



Alcón's mule began to nip dainties on the brambly spot near by.

"My dear Alcón," said Montellano to the Minister, who, worn out by fatigue had thrown himself on the ground. "I am glad to have you here. Now we are going to take a bath, and you will see how quickly your fatigue will pass away. . . . I see already how after the public sale I shall have the Sabanilla railroad on my hands,— after fulfilling all required formalities,— at a million. The Government has done a brilliant stroke of business. The road is worth nothing. The river traffic by way of Bocas de Ceniza has killed it. Day after tomorrow, on the first of January, the first large vessel of the company passes through, and everything is quiet, and nobody is talking of war, as Ronderos used to do constantly. Good, for what we return please give me the decree for the '48 issue of bonds. That cursed old Ronderos did not want to re-establish the old fund. . . . I know already all about that operation just as I do about the loans . . ."

Alcón collected himself, gave Montellano a sharp glance, made a very grave face, and put on his ministerial frown.

"Ah, Don Ramón," he said, "we shall see, . . . afterwards . . . we shall not delay the matter . . . the question shall be studied. . . . After all, this does not depend upon me . . . it is not entrusted to my department."

"Why, on whom does it depend, then?"

Alcón compressed his lips, and shot a meaningful glance at his questioner.

"On whom does it depend? . . . hm, hm! Rather on you, on you yourself."

Montellano now understood, and felt a vague disquiet. If Dolores should not consent? If Roberto should not keep his promise? . . . He had so much business to transact in that department!

Doctor, Señor Minister, your honor ought to take a bath now. That will refresh you, and you will feel much rested. After that we shall go to my house. Aura is awaiting you for dinner. . . . Dolores told me that it would give her much pleasure to see you . . . she also is waiting for you."

Hearing the name of Dolores, Alcón's face brightened, began

to look more human, and his false little smile shone all over his countenance.

"We'll try this bath," he said.

And he had grown so merry that he burst out into a tremendous laugh, and both men began to undress.

"Señor Don Ramón," then remarked the Minister, in a confidential, familiar tone, "my excellent friend (he pulled off the one sleeve), as you know (pulling off the other), I have for quite a long time been expecting an answer. . . . I am going to prove to you that you did wisely (and he folded his coat up with great care), to give me your advice upon the subject of matrimony. . . . Yes, Señor Don Ramón, let us talk about this with entire frankness, with an open heart (and he unbuttoned his waistcoat), for you and I are men with hair on our chests (he pulled off his shirt). Those personal matters of an urgent character are difficult to deal with. As our beautiful language says: To him whom the clout was never made for, his breeches may give sores." (And he unbuttoned his breeches.)

"Talk, friend, talk," rumbled Montellano, his voice nearly drowned by the rushing sound of the river. "You never in your life had to put on a shirt of eleven varas (and he hung his enormous shirt of tartan stuff on a bush) and know better than anybody where the shoe pinches (pulling off the shoe on his right foot)."

"Well, then, Don Ramón, as I do not care to speak in riddles (and he managed to pull both his socks off), I want to say that I wish the wedding to take place as soon as possible. . . . You say that she on her part has made up her mind. . . . Then it is an understood matter between us two."

Alcón was in good humor, loquacious, and burst out suddenly in high-pitched laughter, as brusque as the neighing of a horse.

"Haha, haha," he neighed, "I shall talk to Dolores this very evening."

Montellano now stepped up to the clear, cool pool, and immersed himself, then drew out his head which was streaming water all over the face, and shouted to Alcón who was waiting at the bank and touching the cold water carefully with the

point of his toe, not wishing to "cultivate closer relations," as he would say in diplomatic parlance, with it.

"I pledge myself to do all that I can, although she is sometimes rather self-willed," said Montellano, "but let us talk plainly. Between us two there must not be any mystery. . . . We understand each other. You know that I have something. It is all invested at good profit. Look at the nice fit I made with La Danta. . . . As my wedding gift I shall make over to you the deeds of Cebaderos and two houses in Royal Street. . . . Good. . . . But, that being so, let us make another loan the coming week. . . . Give me the decree for the amortization fund of the bonds of '48. Really? How much is it? . . . More than eight hundred thousand pesos for payment of the railroad."

Roberto, on leaving Montellano, had taken the path up the hill. On reaching the summit and arriving at the highroad, he halted pantingly, and then followed the road slowly. He was in a meditating and disgusted mood, and a vague sentiment, a mingling of anger, of sadness and distrust, had crept into his heart. At first he resolved not to speak to Dolores. What, after all, did these people matter to him? Let them shift for themselves. Let Alcón and Montellano arrange their affairs as they saw fit. Whether Dolores married or no, and whether Alcón or somebody else became her husband, made very little difference to him. Really? . . . Did it mean so little to him?

He met the great crowd of summer guests who after their bath were taking their afternoon stroll. Doña Aura de Montellano was strolling along in the midst of a bevy of girls that followed her, talking and laughing,—was affecting a juvenile agility, walked with a swaying step, and when smiling showed all her teeth in the midst of which there shone a solid gold one, the result of biting into an unripe apple, as she claimed.

"Roberto, come here, Roberto," she called to him. "I must show you some verses that I wrote yesterday in the shade of that fruit tree yonder, in a moment of inspiration. They are intended for the January issue of the *Mujer Independiente*."

The girls in her train had laughingly ran away as soon as she had started reciting:

## TWILIGHT STRAINS

How pallid is Phœbus of sapphirine light  
While in his arms the sun clasps the night.  
The rose to thee opes her homesick bosom,  
In the sun's greenish waves so swiftly declining,  
How pallid is Phœbus of sapphirine light!

In the crisp golden hue of toppling rushes,  
And in the turquoise blue of an abyss that crushes,  
Reddens the blood of the sun now dying,  
With pinky roses and primroses yellow,  
In the crisp golden hue of toppling rushes.

The shadows ravish the stars anemic  
With their polychrome faded shimmering,  
And their multicolored faintest glimmering,  
And like bloodless loves endemic,  
The shadows ravish the stars anemic.

The passers-by took the road to Volador, avoiding the hill-side; from the depths of the can brake came the dull thunder of the river.

In a group were walking together Doctor Miranda, Alejandro, Doctor Agüeros, and Bellegarde.

"To-morrow," said Bellegarde, "to greet the new year, the first deep-bottomed vessel will pass through the Bocas de Ceniza. Despite certain recent events, of which I as a foreigner have no right to give an opinion, I hope that peace will not be disturbed."

"Peace, yes, there is peace," replied Doctor Agüeros, "the peace of Poland. . . . Ronderos has endeavored to keep us caged in golden cages. . . . And his successors follow in his wake. . . . Frankly I tell you, dear Count, I who have been fighting your projects, your canalization enterprise, that since all this has been undertaken by this present government, it is inadvisable, because it will enable this same government to overcomer the defenders of the national Constitution. The momentary evil will only become a permanent disease."

"That which I see in the country," interrupted the Count,

"after the lapse of ten years of peace, is great activity, great hope, great cheerfulness. Do you not hear yourself the merry bustle, the laughter and songs of those happy young people over yonder? Well, thus it is all over the whole country."

"No, dear Count," retorted Doctor Agüeros, "it is impossible for this feudal colony of Philip II and of Father Thomas de Torquemada ever to attain to a perfect psychological condition. . . . And in speaking that way I do not mean our progressive and enlightened clergy, such people as Doctor Miranda, but I am referring to that drove of foreign adventurers, people of low extraction, who come here after being driven out of their own lands to fatten themselves on us, disguised under the pompous name of sisters of charity or missionaries."

"Beg pardon," broke in Alejandro with some heat, "you must have visited many hospitals, Doctor, and must have watched these same sisters of charity from close by. You must know whether it can be the money they earn that has sent these pious woman on their painful mission. . . . You speak of people of low birth. . . . And you, apostle of democracy, say this? . . . Of course, the nobility of blood plays no important part in this matter. But I see now that you, a radical democrat, demand just that in order to take care of the sick and dying. Good, I am glad of this change in your ideas. And besides, I am acquainted, for instance, with a sister of charity who bears in her escutcheon the cross of the Crusades and in her veins the blood of Mortemar."

"Ah, yes," replied Agüeros, "I have seen her from afar; it is Sister San Ligorio . . . she is neurotic. But I do not want to emphasize that feature of the question. The sisters of charity are excellent women in their way, although they might be displaced by English nurses who are in some respects superior to them. What I do claim is that this country cannot prosper while we are under the control of a government that leans entirely upon the army and the clergy, that is to say, upon those who kill and those who lie. Excluding in my arraignment, of course, as always, my dear Doctor Miranda and those few others who resemble him. . . . But the foreign clergy, the missionaries, they leave their own countries merely to accumulate

riches, to engage in profitable trade, to seek and succeed in life."

"To seek life . . ." exclaimed Doctor Miranda, with an accent of irony. "To seek adventures and wealth! These men who in the school of Catholic apostleship have solely learned the science of seeking death!"

They all stopped walking. Doctor Miranda stood in the center of the group, his cheeks aflame, his eyes flashing with indignation. . . .

"Seek death?" he proceeded, "die, do I say? . . . But that does not tell it all. . . . For they sacrifice their lives not once, nor twice. . . . No, what the missionary learns, what that foreign priest whom you so abhor, learns, is the art of dying, of dying every instant, of dying all the time. First he dies for his own family, for father, mother, for all that we ourselves have and hold dear, and all that makes life worth living, all this he gives up forever. And he dies again, dies a second time, for friendship. He has to tear himself loose once more and for always from his new paternal home. Fatherland? He has not even a fatherland. . . . He dies anew in coming to faraway regions, to the impenetrable forests of America, to the deserts of Caqueta, to the prairies of Casanare, where the sky, the mountains, the customs and manners, even the language, remind him forever that he is a man without a country. . . . And after dying thrice, he has still to die, with an agony that never ceases and which is bound to last until the last hour of his span of life, for he must die also to himself, must extinguish every longing of his very heart and spirit."

Alejandro, who was moved and stirred to the very depths of his soul, drew closer to the priest and offered him his arm. They all went on in silence, Doctor Agüeros being in bad humor, and nobody either ventured to pursue the conversation on the same topic or to turn into new channels. The words of Doctor Miranda had disturbed all his hearers. But suddenly they all involuntarily stopped at a curve in the road to admire the panorama and to linger on the view presented.

In front of them, on the hills, there were huge yellow patches of withered pasture ground; there were the traces of some fire,

black and of capricious forms and hues. Farther away, clinging to the hillsides, there were small houses of blinding white, sheltered all about by weeping willows whose graceful plumage was swaying to and fro in the gentle breeze, and farther below were the meadows between which the river was flowing musically. A bluish mist was veiling the outlines of distant objects. Upon the summits of the hills some trees were traced with softness upon the reddish atmosphere towards the setting sun. In the veiled distance columns of smoke rose straight and clear to the sky; a huge bonfire on the foggy horizon blazed up and went down with varying fire effects. There could be seen, filtering slowly across the enclosure of willows, the glare of a fire. . . .

“Roberto, a folksong, with words of your own.”

And he, strumming his mandolin, burst out singing, accompanied by all the girls who followed him in a harmonious and far-reaching chorus with their fresh and brisk voices, and over them all the voice of Dolores thrilling with passion was clearly distinguishable:

Death is sweet if it comes  
Snatching me from thy side;  
My hands between thine,  
Thy lips upon mine.

The voices were stilled a moment, the mandolins continuing their plaintive rhythm, scattering melancholy through the rushes whence the invisible river still sent its own somber tune. But the chorus began once more:

Oh, but how sad his coming  
In a lonesome spot,  
If thine eyes do not rest on mine,  
My lips not touch thine.

How beautiful Dolores was that night! She was youth itself, youth in bloom. On the banks of the river, remembering her childhood, she had broken off and gathered bunches of wildflowers in the woods, of those flowers without number and without name which embellish the wilderness. Without a mirror, without knowledge of the fashion, she had wound those stray blossoms into her wealth of curly hair. With this simple

ornament, in this strange and unfettered guise, her beauty harmonized deliciously with the beauty of her surroundings.

And in a movement of admiration, Roberto compared her to those flowers which have just opened their hearts in the copses of the woods, to those gladiolas which flourish on the verge of the road, filled with the rays of the sun and which, in that instant, in the splendors of a sunny afternoon, spread all the delicate perfume of their corollas. In the depths of her black eyes could be divined her secret burden, the premature fatigue of life, the satiety of the soul, the breaking up of the first love which yet surrounded Dolores with a luminous nimbus.

“Why are you singing these sad songs, Roberto?”

“Have you ever heard merry folksongs? Do you not remember this stanza of Pombo’s:

“A wayward tune,  
Friend yet destroyer,  
Which weeps with the weeper,  
Yet soon wakes woe.”

And Dolores continued:

“Oh, for a burst of laughter,  
Turbulent, bestial,  
But glowing with passion  
And fire celestial.”

“Very good, Dolores. I admit my defeat. But let us not go back to melancholy songs, and rather speak of pleasant things,” answered Roberto in a tone of scarcely perceptible displeasure, “for right now I am going to tell you a piece of good news.”

“A piece of good news?”

She listened to him hesitatingly, always afraid of his caprices, and suspicious of him, and in order to avoid disappointment, she instantly made up her mind to collect herself and to show a prudent reserve, to oppose her valor to his pride, with the spirit of her race of fighters.

“What is the news?”

“Doctor Alcón is going to arrive here this evening.”

“I am glad of it, for he is a good friend of my father’s.”



"But he is a better admirer of your own: a model wooer, fine and constant."

"In that case he has one quality which others lack."

"Which quality?"

"Well, that one . . . the one you just named: constancy."

"Doctor Alcón is full of good qualities, who dares doubt it?"

"You yourself admit it."

"I know what he is looking for in Ubaque. According to what you intimate, after so many other successes, he will achieve here one more. His honor is coming to propose to you to become his wife."

Silence. Two little birds close by are chasing each other, rising, falling, lose themselves at last in the amber atmosphere.

"And what do you advise me to do, Roberto?" asked Dolores in her voice of clear crystal.

"That you take counsel with an adviser who never deceives us. Consult your heart."

"And what if my heart does not care to answer, if it is silent, and remains mute, if it is afraid to talk," she concluded in a low voice, which seemed to strangle and die.

"Then that is proof that you must take counsel with your head."

"And what is that going to say?"

"That Doctor Alcón is a man who has made his way upward steadily and rapidly, enterprising and laborious . . . a writer of merit, a practical man of common sense, a minister who seems exempt from bad fortune, one who understands how to combat and how to win. . . . That life itself is not a poem . . . and that you had better not trust those dreamers, those fickle ones, those of complicated nature, those who like sad folksongs, and those who do not believe in paragons."

They followed the others in silence, Roberto with his head hanging low, she with head on high, with eyes that shone with suppressed pain and fear.

The immense shadow of the Guayacunde fell aslant the brows of the hills and declivities. From the depths rose the perfumes of the jessamines and of humbler flowers, mingled with those of primroses and fruit trees, and the tepid aroma emitted by the sugar mills, whence issued the long thumping

of the engines, at regular intervals, the whistling and songs of the carriers and drivers. The dusky air was already swept with twilight shadows, while overhead could still be seen wings of birds gilt by the dying sun, and these looked like creatures aflame. Between the rows of trees, the street musicians, with a variety of popular tunes sang and played their best, seeking applause from all,—balconies and chairs,—delighted their hearers with improvisations in inimitable style, and as an encore to her cavatina the mountain primadonna would respond, just as in the case of arias with chorus, with the Spanish folksong, the bambuco, this other free-souled and primitive song, and the plaint of the mandolin:

My hands between thine,  
Thy lips upon mine.

“I should like to go that way,” murmured Roberto, giving himself up to sadness, “in a year, in a day, amid these simple, great things, and murmur my last words together with those of these innocent and pure beings.”

He raised his eyes. The sky, clear and very high, was speckled with stars. A zone of luminous dust covered the whole firmament from one extreme to the other. The fireflies began to shed a dim luster like sparks torn away by the wind from a far away conflagration. Out of the cane brake, the depths, the trees and bushes the odors of the night plants and flowers exhaled their perfume, and the confused harmonies of this nature which in falling asleep retains the mingled palpitations and murmurs. There floated all around an immense calm in the midst of which was raised the voice of the river which was still intoning the *requiem* of idylls, the *de profundis* of buried bliss. An outline approached Dolores and Roberto.

“Is it you, Doctor Alcón? I had not recognized you,” exclaimed Roberto. “Are you looking for Dolores? I believe she was waiting for you. . . . Good night!”

## CHAPTER XXVIII

## A MASQUERADE BALL

It is the thirty-first of December. All the summer guests in Ubaque, the Bogotá people who have come to seek in that smiling place relief from care and diversion, health and intercourse with persons similarly inclined, have met in the pleasant anticipation of another day of amusement. Alejandro and Roberto are giving that night a farewell masquerade ball in honor of Count Bellegarde at the Union Club, as the Count is starting on his homeward journey for Europe on the following day. The year is departing, and departing amidst laughter and flowers, rejoicings and amusements.

As the Count wished to see the lagoon of Ubaque, he has undertaken a trip with his friends through the hills which lead to it. At the head of the whole cavalcade rides General Ronderos.

"You cannot imagine," he said, "how happy I feel. That life of unending preoccupation, of anxieties and unrest, was a burden too heavy for my shoulders. To make peace secure, to insure a quick development of affairs, was my only ambition while in the cabinet, and I believe I have done my share towards that end while it was in my power to do so. I feel a great satisfaction, Señor Bellegarde, to have arranged with you the contract for the canalization of the river, and to have defended it. With that great work which will without doubt enrich the country, a great step toward definite pacification has been taken."

"My gratitude, General," answered the Count, "is due to you, for the faith which you have consistently shown in me, and the kindness you have displayed at the same time, is indeed very great. No doubt the country, performing an act of justice and also in its own interest, will recall you soon to preside once more over its destinies."

"Oh, no, sir, I do not wish it, I do not, indeed. I must think solely of how to prepare myself to die well. I feel very old."

A woman who did messenger service for the telegraph op-

erator, came panting with a telegram for Bellegarde. It was opened. "It is the news," said Bellegarde, after reading it, "that the first large ship, the Colombia, will to-morrow enter by way of Bocas de Ceniza, as we had promised."

"Praised be God from the bottom of my soul," exclaimed Ronderos, his eyes moist with emotion, and shaking hands with the Count.

"Besides," he continued, "there is more news which will sound pleasant in the ears of the shareholders. The enterprise has awakened real enthusiasm. The shares of one pound each are now being quoted at four pounds on the London Exchange. A great amount of capital is being offered to me for new enterprises. I feel profoundly sorry to be obliged to leave the country to-morrow."

"And is there no way of inducing you to stay a while longer, my friend?" exclaimed General Ronderos.

"Impossible. To-morrow it will be precisely a year, you gentlemen may recollect, since I was notified that my group was busy with the idea of canalizing the Seine and making Paris a sea port. Thereupon I presented my plans and projects to a commission studying the matter. The commission has approved them, and the French parliament is going to take them now into consideration. It is absolutely necessary for me to present myself in person. I hope, however, to return to Colombia very soon, since Colombia is to me the most attractive of all countries in America. During my absence Alejandro and Roberto will remain in charge of the whole enterprise. And they will advance things, I have no doubt."

"I suppose," said Alejandro to Roberto in an aside, "that your fears and hesitations have by now disappeared. Your 32,000 shares are worth 128,000 pounds sterling by this time. That is quite a little fortune, eh? You can now redeem your house, as well as the two haciendas, leaving you a good-sized reserve."

"But I have not so far, and I do not now intend to sell these shares. It would be a breach of good faith."

They arrived on the heights. Beyond the rough hillside there stretched a vast plain of marshy pastures. They put foot on ground, approached the edge of the mountain side, and regarded the far view silently.

"Rather rare, this, I think, Count, is it not," said the General, "this lagoon at such a height? There is a certain resemblance to some of the Swiss lakes."

A perfect calm enwrapped the entire landscape. The lake reflected the granite peaks of the neighboring steep mountains, the immense back of the Guayacundo, which rose up almost sheer from the water's edge and was portrayed in all its details with photographic correctness, while the gaze of the beholder was unable to distinguish where the reality ended and its reflection began. At the bottom a bluish light prevailed through which the clouds appeared to sail through a wavering luminous opening in the center of the smooth surface. An eagle, master of these lonesome spots, floated and balanced himself with his immovable widespread wings. The wind then crumpled the level surface of the water, stirring slowly the heavy fluid, and when the latter again flattened out, it took on glints of mother-of-pearl, of steel. There was a big patch of rushes rising out of the calm water, and the mirroring flood was divided by two long lines that were breaking up, and then the lake presented an aspect both delightful and sinister. The breeze set in again, the splash of a wave larger and deeper than the others was heard. . . . And again the whole scene was enwrapped in the most profound silence.

Maratón, the dog, had dived down into the bed of rushes, scurrying here and there about in it, but sprang suddenly upon the lush grass growing there, emitting a growl of rage.

"What is it, Maratón? What is troubling you? Have you heard some of Wagner's music?"

The dog came forth. Watching the direction he took, they saw upon a declivity, on top of a rock, a rider on a black horse.

"It is Socarraz, the scorpion," exclaimed Chispas, coming forth suddenly, revolver in hand.

"Leave him, leave him," replied Ronderos. "Let us ride down to the village. They are awaiting us."

When they arrived there, everybody was in merry humor and full of enthusiasm. There were dust clouds and much noise, the jingle of harness, ladies and gentlemen galloping along the road, following the path down the hillside, towards the place chosen for the celebration.

The whole cavalcade, mad with excitement and enjoyment, was jamming into the narrow vale of El Volador, and was dashing up and down the dusty highroad. The cobblestones rang with hoofbeats, and the horses on hearing the patter of so many animals and their riders on the stone pavements leading to the depths below where the river was roaring, pointed their ears, and pressed closer against the rocks beside the path. The rejoicing went on increasing, the unrestrained merriment grew steadily, because down there in the lower places could already be discerned the spot picked out for the festival, with the Union Club, the numerous tents noticeable in their snowy white, and the girdle around it all formed by the silvery river, to which the shadows and the orange plantations afforded a charming contrast.

There was a transparent atmosphere, the vivifying sun of the tropics brilliantly poured its flood of light upon the fronds of the palms, and gave to the scarlet petals of the flowers the glowing appearance of rubies.

And as the cavalcade descended lower and lower the heat became greater and Nature more lavish. An intense well being, a palpitating joy seemed at the same time to penetrate the veins of everybody, and some of the general rejoicing was creeping into all these bodies of merry-makers, injecting a more vigorous sap and a new blood into them all. The trees with their abundance of foliage were filled with this magic savor, as well as all hearts. Approaching the river, they crossed now the bridge, the noise all the while deafening, and came out on a plain covered with fruit trees; there the Rio Blanco and the Rio Negro join, form a new whole, and merge their waters amidst the rushing thunder of their waves.

All those present, come from everywhere, are in an uproar of liberty and excitement, singing, laughing, running about on the plain, making the horses bathed in sweat dance on the velvet turf, skirmish about in lively groups, plucking whole handfuls of blossoming flowers, despoiling the bearing trees in the orchard, intoxicating themselves with the delicious fragrance of the lemon-trees, gathering bunches of orange blossoms, and spilling all over the grass the gold of the oranges. The savor rising up from the soil itself fills the lungs, the tropical vigor rushes to the head and face, and this, together with the merri-

ment of the festivity itself, fires all pulses, enshrouds them in a vibrant atmosphere, so that the fever steals into the arteries. After a time the excitement of this fever begins to breed fatigue, the tension of enthusiasm relaxes, the greed for pleasure diminishes, will power itself deadens, and then comes a mist of stupor, a wave of languor, and melancholy invades them all, takes possession of them, submerges them gently.

Alcón, with Dolores (now his betrothed), on his arm, is going from group to group receiving felicitations and well-wishes; Doña Aura does not enjoy herself, but Montellano is gorged with satisfaction and pride.

"Doctor Alcón, you succeed in everything."

"Mr. Minister, what a fine couple you and your betrothed make!"

"Your honor has obtained a success more decisive than your literary and political ones."

"Dolores, accept my wishes for your happiness! I think it is assured."

And she, leaning with abandon on the arm of her future husband, let herself be led on by him, receiving congratulations and good wishes, walking with a firm step, with a mien of resolution, with a shining, resolute glance.

Alcón, on his part, always stiff, accepted this homage ceremoniously, allowed people to heap flattering remarks and felicitations on him, and as if at his desk in the department, answered them with a slight bend of the head, murmured evasive replies, vague words, smiled disdainfully, threw his head back, made gestures of assertive cheerfulness, and from time to time directed over his eyeglasses, at Roberto, haughty glances full of insolence and cunning.

Gacharnah walked about with his paunch triumphantly, keeping a whole squadron of servants on the run, offering goblets of champagne, sandwiches, mountains of biscuits; he himself would uncork the bottles, would carry about in his chubby hands, while performing miracles of equilibrium, piles of plates, ice-cream in cups, and desserts. He felt upon his shoulders the responsibility of the mission entrusted to him by Alejandro and Roberto, and priding himself on his fine taste, his activity, his culinary knowledge, would sweep into the tents, help the attendants carve the turkeys and slice the hams, denouncing

the chef's qualifications as a cook. And when everything seemed in running order, he would mingle with the guests, approach a table piled high with bottles and flasks, seize liquors and table ingredients, pour the drink out into two tall glasses, and would, bowing gracefully, offer to the guests his latest concoction, a refreshing beverage, pink and foaming, the "Montellano cocktail."

Night came, and the greensward was deserted, while the invited assembly began to prepare for the masquerade ball. Between the darkening foliage became visible balls of colored light, and next the level space was crossed by long rosaries of glowing color. From the big tent which had been prepared for the ball, there issued vivid streams of light.

Then the orchestra burst into its enlivening strains. And the waves of the river, the waves of light and the waves of music flowed and merged into one blend of harmonies, bursting out and reflected by the rocks all around.

At last the longed-for hour arrives. The maskers have invaded the central hall of the club, as well as the gardens. All epochs are represented, and all colors. Grenadiers of the imperial guard, Indians, Japanese, dominoes, the Druids walk arm in arm with common wenches. Philip II meets Cleopatra, and the stately monarch at once breaks out in a fit of hearty laughter. The Three Musketeers have taken hold of three old women painted up as papal adherents. Mephistopheles bows and takes off his red beretta, in order to salute a nun in a white frock.

In a nook of the tent a Spanish hidalgo in surcoat and powdered wig is whispering to a knight in full armor, his vizier closed and the plumes of his steel helmet erect and waving.

"Look at Carmen, she has made an Andalusian sovereign of herself. Just notice how that Scotchman, that Edgar, is following her, jealous and in love with her. . . . My, my, how the Garter with its diamond ribbon contrasts finely in the costume of the minister with the silken stockings!"

The hours pass, the new year draws near. The old year is going amidst gay lovemaking and bright smiles, amidst flowers and happiness, amidst the maddening mazes of the dance, and the shouts of reveling.

The clamors of a waltz are stilled, and a chorus of voices, accompanied by the chords of the mandolin, is intoning a *bam-*



*buco*. And the couples and beauties approach and listen to that song so unrestrained in its rhythms, so capricious and audacious in its tune, so monotonous and sad, so simple and spontaneous, like the murmur of the river itself, like the breathing of the dawn, like the splendor of the birds, like all the harmonies of Nature. But in spite of being one of Nature's own cries, in spite of its simplicity, it takes possession of the soul, softens it, fills it with melancholy and sadness, dares to say those things which lips would not dare to frame, breeds confidence, encourages the heart to begin a love dialogue, . . . mute, eloquent, bold.

"Let us dance the *bambuco!*"

"Somebody give us the *bambuco!*"

All the young couples, however, begged to be excused, pleading that none of them knew how to perform it. Nobody at all ventured to walk up to the center of the hall.

"Dolores! Let Dolores dance it!"

Alcón, making use of his double authority as minister and fiancé, approached her, took her arm, and begged her to yield to the general request. Then she tore her mask off her face, threw it aside, went to the center, and waited. Everybody was looking for a young partner for her, a partner worthy of her, but no one appeared in the center of the space. Then voices were raised.

"Roberto! Roberto! Let Roberto dance!"

His friends, opening their ranks, discovered him, took him by the arm, and pushed him into the center. He and she, distrustful, like fugitives, gazed mutely at each other from afar, each avoiding the other's eyes.

Eternal story of love,  
Law that Nature's self ordains:  
Woman follows him who flees,  
And flees from him who follows.

The strumming of the guitars is now heard, and the mandolins twang their plaintive chords, like sobs cut short, like sighs of passion or supplications, and together these instruments are weaving with their chords a simple, touching melody, stammering its thrilling meaning, but a melody which soon changes, assuming penetrating vibrations, accents filled with the breath of ardent love, and ending in a fiery declaration. And then this

melody, as though harking back to its humble beginnings, returns to the first bars, enmeshes itself once more, like a filament in network, enwrapping all hearts, spurring them on, and confounding all in one single palpitation, in one sole shudder and swoon.

Dolores and Roberto, in the midst of all this noise and excitement, looked at each other only sidewise and stealthily. She in her Carmen costume, vigorous, animated by the music, assuming the attitude of a woman of the people, full of natural grace and verve, arrogant and insolent. She threw away her velvet cape, and then, slender and agile, advanced to the sound of the *bambuco*, of that song which starts in a slow measure, languid and listless, but which goes on gathering life and warmth. He on his part crossed the hall, reaching his partner, kneeling down and rising again, receding, then searching for her, while she followed him, avoided him, fled, and both maintained this pursuit, this flight, forming circles, weaving figures in the dance, and next swiftly breaking them up again, always to the accompaniment of a music that undulates, that sings and weeps, that threatens and menaces. And the rhythm steadily quickens, is agitated by feverish shocks; the mandolins give more of an imploring and thrilling expression to their plaints and sobs. The musical phrase of the flutes becomes precipitate, shrill, and dominating.

A mysterious fluid began to run through the veins of the spectators, who applauded with frenzy, and who divined in the soul of the young couple a tender drama developing itself. They, the two dancers, while the dance proceeded with its pretty curves, gave themselves up to the intoxication of the moment. They were afraid to meet and touch during its windings, they avoided a direct gaze at one another, and they were thinking of fate that always brought them in touch again, forced them to look for each other, to persecute each other, imitating in the dance itself all the gestures, all the fires of a passion which insinuates itself, which flees and attracts, which conquers while fleeing, and at last, longing for each other, inflamed and dazzled by their own feelings, as though pushed on by an irresistible force, they approach, look without reserve, smile, and then stretch out their hands, trembling in every limb. . . .

“New Year’s! New Year’s!”

All the slender tall goblets in which the froth of the champagne is running over, are raised in the hands of the company. The orchestra bursts out in a triumphal hymn saluting the new year.

"New Year's, New Year's!"

Shouts are suddenly heard in the garden. Shouts and rough voices again. Then one . . . two . . . three shots.

"General Ronderos!" . . .

"Here! Here!"

Roberto and Alejandro are outside in a flash, and see at some distance, by the light of the Japanese lanterns, a group of men in violent motion. They reach the point. They see General Ronderos, who is assisted by Chispas and Casanova, defending his life against four horsemen. In the half light Roberto recognizes the black horse of Socarraz. Chispas and Casanova point their revolvers again and fire upon their aggressors. The horse of Socarraz, wounded, begins to rise on its haunches, makes its escape with great bounds, takes the road leading up the hillside, and is lost in the dark. The other riders follow him.

"What's the matter, General?"

"An attack upon me. . . . I was in the gardens, together with the Count. . . ."

"They wanted to carry off my General," says Chispas.

"General Ronderos, General Ronderos!" shouted the telegraph operator, coming up at a run with a telegram in her hand. The General reads:

"Most Urgent!

General Ronderos.—In Ubaque, or wherever he may be found.

"A revolution has broken out in the entire Republic. They communicate with the Northern frontier. Tubalcain Cardoso proclaimed generalissimus and highest chief. Landáburo at the front with forces. Exposito Montes and Nero Jaspe declare themselves provisional president in Honda. Polanco proclaimed on the Coast. Terenico Nichols in Ambalema. Government hopes your patriotism will charge itself with command as chief of the constitutional army.

"THE PRESIDENT, SANMARTIN."

At that moment there came the report of a shot from the steep rocks by the river bed, and with it a wild voice shouting:

"Long live the Revolution!"

There was everywhere confusion, dismay, sobs. Doña Aura

shrieked, and tore the telegram out of the hands of General Ronderos.

"Tubalcain! . . . My husband! . . . He has come to life again. . . . A hero!"

Between hysterical convulsions of laughter and tears she was taken to the tent of Gacharnah, and her friends surrounded her without knowing whether they ought to congratulate her or to show her the cold shoulder. Gacharnah, from among the amazed crowd, approached the poetess and, radiant with joy, drenched his dainty linen handkerchief with perfume, and then applied it to the nostrils of Doña Aura:

"It is the choicest scent of Houbigant's," he exclaimed; "it is Celestial Extra," and he smiled proudly.

Montellano came also, frowned, made a motion as though in protest against these proceedings. With his big voice he dominated the general chorus of fright, but a moment after was showing a flash of joy in his eagle eyes because of the reappearance of Cardoso. Then he went in search of Alcón and found him already on horseback, ready to start for the Capital with his body of employees.

"Dear Alcón, Mr. Minister; what has happened just now to me, as husband of the wife of a revolutionary, might compromise me much. But you know, I am nowise responsible for that. Our arrangement remains fixed as before . . . and that is sufficient."

Meanwhile the servants, in the midst of the terror and surprise, were busy tearing from the bushes and plants and trees the still burning Japanese lanterns to light up the path on their flight. The masked guests, on the other hand, with the blind impetus to save themselves at any cost, in the disarray of a desperate flight, in the confusion of the moment, mounted, after seizing on some horse, and departed with the utmost haste, their hoarse and ill-controlled voices betraying despair and affright, and in the mists outside they were scarcely able to recognize one another. They fled from the group of buildings, crossed the bridge with shouts, took the road to El Volador, passed hurriedly through the streets of Ubaque, and made for the route leading to the Capital, with continual expressions of amazement, turning their heads to look back, believing that at every instant there might appear guerrilla bands amidst the rocks, in the narrow

mountain paths, on the brambly wastes. Trying to find the way in the obscurity, but unable to make out anything, clutching the withers of their animals like madmen, passing the narrow bridges which shook and bent under the great load, they tottered along the mountain paths with trembling limbs, descended across the deep ditches and clefts, stumbling and falling, climbed the narrow paths up and down the hillside, and only by a miracle escaped coming to an early end by falling over precipices.

Hours later, there might still have been remarked the strange sight of troupes of these mummers from the masquerade, attired fantastically, and with all the appearance of a procession of demented and mortally frightened beings, fighting their way homewards across the stony parts of the panorama, in the bleak light of dawn, making the impression, from a distance, of capricious silhouettes, hastening towards the Capital, looking at the same time sinister and laughable, deadly tired and trembling under their brilliant costumes of velvet, satin and tinsel, the colors contrasting forcibly with the pale, disheveled appearance of their wearers, in whose faces could be read lack of sleep, carking care, disenchantment and fatigue.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### ADVANTAGES OF WAR

#### DECREE NUMBER 3 OF THE 1st OF JANUARY. . . .

By which Public Order is declared disturbed within the whole Republic.

The President of the Republic, making use of the powers conferred upon him by Article 121 of the Constitution, and after hearing the opinion of the Council of State, and-

#### *Considering*

1. That many Revolutionaries in the close neighborhood of the territory of Venezuela and well-known for their enmity to the institutions and the Government of Colombia, amongst them the so-called General Tubalcain Cardoso, have approached with Revolutionary forces the frontiers of this Republic.

2. That at the same time the Government is receiving news from divers parts of the Republic from which it appears that a general Revolution has broken out;

3. That important press organs in this Capital and particularly *La Integridad*, *La Revaluación*, and *El Escorpión*, have for a long time been exciting the population to rebellion;

4. That the Government of the Republic cannot remain indifferent in face of this external danger and of a civil war entirely unjustifiable and in any case certain to cause ruin and desolation to the country, for which reason it is his duty, in conformity with the Constitution and the Laws, to defend it and to defend the public order, while it has not sufficed for that purpose to show a conciliatory conduct on the part of the Government nor to propose a reduction of the size of the public forces, nor to respect scrupulously the rights of everybody and to give to the press of the opposition the most complete liberty in its criticism of the actual Administration.

*Decrees:*

Article One. Public Order is declared disturbed within the whole Republic, the territory of which is declared in a state of siege.

The Governors of the Departments are hereby invested with the prerogatives of civil and military chiefs.

To be communicated and published.

Given in Bogotá. . . .

F. DE P. SANMARTIN.

The Minister of State: Esteban Torralba. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nabuco Benavides. The Minister of Finance, in charge of the Department of War, Melchor Alcón. . . . The Minister of Public Instruction, Max. Ovalle.

AMAZED people were massed at the corners of the streets reading this decree. And following this, with the swiftness habitual in such cases, another poster was being affixed beside the above, reading:

DECREE NUMBER 3 OF THE 1ST OF JANUARY. . . .

By which the functions of the civil and military chiefs are determined. The President of the Republic.

In view of Articles 61 and 121 of the Constitution,

*Decrees:*

Article 1. The Governors, in their character of civil and military chiefs, are herewith clothed with the following powers:

1. To organize the military forces required for the reestablishment of order.

2. To carry out the expropriations and forced loans demanded by the circumstances.

In the premises of the war department meanwhile all sorts of people are invading the passages, the offices, and come and go in turbulent groups, shout, call to each other, strut around, and all with the same disorder and anxiety which would be shown in

case of a big fire. New faces are to be seen in which can be read the fear, the curiosity, the joy, the dissimulation, the importance which the place and time inspire. There are uniforms, red and blue and green ones, very recently donned or resurrected. Voices used to command are to be heard, with interjections, curses, impatient grumblings. And meanwhile, the clerks without interrupting their work are bowed over their desks, making flourishes with their pens, copying orders, notes, telegrams, deaf to all the uproar that is going on all around them.

The door which communicates with the office of the assistant secretary is slamming every minute with the incessant passing through of section chiefs, of a thousand clerks and employees, of military men who are coming to get the required signatures for passports, pay checks, railroad passes, permits for night service, etc. And the assistant secretary, after a rapid glance at these papers, without reading them, goes on signing and signing, with pain in his shoulder and his arm, dazed, tired out by the incessant tumult, by the deafening roar of voices, by the rush and fuss in the adjoining offices, and by the click of the telegraph apparatus installed there, which with its desperate tick-tack, seemingly restless and unappeasable, makes every nerve tingle, precisely like the whole country, which is in a state of high fever.

In steps a priest, correct, tall, ruddy, blue eyes, military carriage, tempered with modesty.

"I am Father Aragón," he says, bowing politely to the assistant secretary, "and chaplain of the Grenadiers that march away this afternoon. I came to get my commission papers."

He takes his papers and folds them up neatly, and at the door he meets Karlonoff (Colonel of bridges and highroads, technical adviser of the department, first assistant secretary, etc.), who brings in his pocket a resolution by which every soldier must carry in his knapsack "the golden book of the Colombian soldier," which has been written by this same Karlonoff for the "use of the three arms." . . .

At the same instant, too, there enters Sánchez de Peñanegra to offer an invention of his which for reasons of notorious injustice had not received the endorsement of the two chambers, namely, "the gun without repercussion," and within a few moments there has developed, augmenting the existing turmoil, an

interminable discussion, full of technical terms, between these two experts:

"It must be remembered that the distance from the bore to the breech is almost the same as from the touchhole to the circumference."

"I don't deny it," interrupts Sánchez de Peñanegra, after a violent fit of coughing, and holding up his hand to make Karlsonoff understand that he wishes to finish what he has to say, "but if we consider that the space between the lock communicates with the bore, etc."

He was rendered speechless once more by another terrific attack of his cough, and half-dead, tears running out of his eyes, stammering, he nevertheless continued the discussion, and he and the technical adviser of the department retreated, amidst waves upon waves of people, from one office to another, explaining their different theories.

"I want, above all, first the guns," at last concludes the Colonel of the bridges and highways, locking himself up in his private office, and without giving the inventor a chance of following him there. "The latest invention, the latest patent is spoken of in the *Military Review* of Tokio. It is the 100 Gun, the big Yamagata."

Behind a door guarded by two sentinels and locked at double turn, Minister Alcón is attending to business. He is benumbed by his sleepless night, still quite disabled by the frightful trip through the night, by the terror of his fellow travelers, and somewhat dazed by the recent events which, he begins to think, have perhaps gone a trifle farther than he had foreseen.

Gacharnah, fresh, rosy of complexion, with an air of total satisfaction, his paunch still in triumphant evidence, in his buttonhole wearing a faded chrysanthemum, is seated right in front, his limbs elegantly displayed upon a Louis XVI sofa with gilt and carved frame.

"My dear Doctor Alcón," he says, "the cloth is ready, in agreement with our understanding, sufficient for 20,000 outfits, Edwards type . . . there is nothing to beat it in the whole place."

There came a smart rap at the door leading into the passageway, evidently by a person of importance.

"It is I, the technical adviser," said the voice.



They withdrew the bolt and turned the key.

"It is indispensable to urge at once," Karlonoff said, after having locked the door again, "urge by cable the instant remittance of those 10,000 rifles with their munition, five million cartridges, and furthermore as a specialty of the first magnitude, those big guns for the Grenadiers; these guns are the last word of modern science, and of artillery: the 100 cannon, long Yamagata."

"I will take charge of that," exclaimed Gacharnah, all aglow with happiness. "The order will be filled and the goods here before another sixty days. That matter is settled."

"Yes, friend, that may be considered settled; but for all purchases of this kind, remember, it is necessary that the other members of the cabinet empower me to sign a document which I have just drawn up."

A timid knock at the door. Alcón hurried to it, and without opening took a paper which was passed to him through the chink.

"Ah, here it is, just what you want," said Alcón.

Gacharnah read:

DECREE NUMBER 3 OF THE 1st OF JANUARY. . . .

Concerning the formalities to be complied with in contracts for the supply of war material for the army.

The President of the Republic,

*Considering:*

That the urgency with which war material of every description has to be obtained,—and also those objects required for the mobilization and equipment of the army,—is very great, and that it is difficult and in many cases not feasible to effect a meeting and the presence of all the members of the council of Ministers, at all times and when it would be necessary for the previous approval of said contracts,

*Decree:*

Therefore, those contracts which in amount exceed a thousand pesos, concluded by the Minister of War, are to be excepted from the aforementioned formality, and shall require for their validity solely the approval of the said minister. . . .

"Very well, very well!" exclaimed Gacharnah, while he burst into a sonorous guffaw. "Then will your honor please order the disposition regarding the cloth we spoke of as was suggested."

"It is precisely for that I am now starting the big storehouse under the directions of Gonzáles Mogollón," observed Alcón, who did quickly whatever he undertook to do. "As regards the arms and the Yamagata guns, we must amend the contract."

"May I mention once more the vessel of which I have previously spoken to your honor? It is going to be the cruiser *Alcón*. . . ."

Alcón frowned slightly, and then pursed his lips in the ministerial style. . . .

"We shall see . . . the question will be duly considered . . . we must not unnecessarily hasten the matter."

And while Gacharnah nevertheless was pressing, there were new knocks at the door.

"It is Doctor Agüeros!" was the announcement on the other side.

The Doctor entered, while Gacharnah went out to send off his cable relative to the cargo of weapons.

"Although we are adversaries," said Doctor Agüeros, smilingly, "here I come with a philanthropic project, friend Alcón. I know that those sectarians, Ronderos and Company, would oppose this, for they do not trust me, but with you it is different. For you I should myself vote in a political convention. . . . Well, friend Doctor, I wanted to say that in this nice little war which my fellow partizans have begun in defense of their rights, much blood is going to flow, or I am much mistaken. In a word, the Republic is entering on a new era, is in a new morbid state . . . and the crisis," he said this smilingly, "might end perhaps in the complete recovery of the patient. . . . Meanwhile, in my position as physician, in whose eyes there are neither friends nor foes, but merely patients, I am going to fulfil my duty."

And he was silent for a moment, awaiting the effect of his words.

"Not to lose time," he then proceeded, "here I have the whole project of organizing the ambulances. Doña Aura de Cardoso, who is so much of a patriot, is charged with the use of a thousand kilograms of lint and of two kilometers of gauze bandages. I will sell to the Government, from my drugstore, at almost cost price, 100,000 packages of hydrophilous cotton gauze."

Alcón received the paper and read:

Art. 4. The surgeon-in-chief of the model ambulance is to receive a compensation equal in amount to that of a general of division.

Art. 5. The personnel of the ambulance will proceed automatically.

“Very well. . . Colonel Sandoval y Sabogal, will you please take notice of this decree and of the despatch nominating Doctor Agüeros.”

Overtopping all the turmoil outside there came the voice of González Mogollón.

“You will see, your honor,” exclaimed the latter, after entering and closing the door behind him, “how well I have already organized the big storehouse. Here I bring the draft of the decree: it is the same text as the one used at the last revolution.”

The decree concluded:

Señor Don R. González Mogollón, director of the army storehouses, will receive the same emolument as a brigadier general, so far as fiscal effects are concerned.

The doorkeeper announced the aide-de-camp of the President. Alcón and Karlonoff were left alone, and the door was again locked.

“I bring,” said the aide, “this decree relative to the reorganization of the army, and am handing now, with a paper bearing the signature of His Excellency, a sketch in which the President asks Doctor Alcón also to sign this decree immediately, for reasons of great urgency.”

Alcón read it hastily, signed and then read it once more leisurely:

Decree number 4 of the first of January . . . by which an army corps is created.

The President of the Republic orders:

Art. 1. To be organized an army corps for operations against the rebels in the center of the Republic and along the Atlantic coast.

2. Call into active service General-in-Chief Pedro Alcantara Ronderos, and appoint him chief of operations and chief commander of the forces which constitute said army.

3. Confer on the General Alejandro Borja the effectivity of that grade. Summon him to active service, in appointing him chief of staff of the army spoken of above.

4. Appoint Colonel Roberto Ávila first adjutant-general of the chief commander, to whom that rank and post is confided.

Art. 5. Appoint as chaplain of the army the priest Doctor Miranda.

Art. 6. Confer the title of Brigadier-General upon Colonel Rafael Borrero, and appoint him chief of the battalion of Grenadiers.

Art. 7. The cavalry squadrons Lancers of the Vanguard, which will form the Ronderos column, will be commanded by Colonel Milan Gil, and the battalion First of Bogotá by Colonel Casanova.

"It is all right," said Alcón, handing him the decree signed, and in a resigned attitude. "I have affixed my signature, although there is here somewhere in the text a French gerund.

Military music was heard on the square, bellicose notes which made the window panes rattle. Alcón and Karlonoff ran to the windows, and saw that the battalion of grenadiers began to file past on its way to the railway station, with General Borrero at its head.

On the square, which was crowded with people, the multitude began to raise a clamor, and this mingled with the strains of the military band and the clatter of the horses.

There were cries:

"Long live the Constitutional army!"

"Long life to it!"

"Death to it!" bellowed a number of other voices, raging wildly.

A great tumult arose in the square, a terrific scuffle in which umbrellas and walking canes played a great part as weapons.

Meanwhile the battalion went on filing past in a compact column, and the rifles were all carried at the same height, so that as the men marched along their left arms all described the same motion, and it looked almost like the monotonous oscillation of so many pendulums.

The square went on filling more and more, being now a black sea of the merely curious, of people frightened, surprised, or inflamed with political hatred.

"Death to Tubalcain Cardoso!"

"Long life to him!"

New scuffles, insults, threats, challenges. Eyes inflamed with passion, livid faces, clenched fists, hats smashed, canes broken.

"Long life to the veteran, General Borrero!" somebody shouted from the porch of the Capitol.

Borrero did not turn his head, but his horse rose proudly on his hind feet, as though proud of its rider.

There was a great throng of people pushing and bustling

about one corner; a thousand heads stared at an enormous poster which stated:

"The Rebellion. Bulletin Number 1. Cacota de la Matanza, January 1. . . .  
To President Republic.  
Please copy.

Revolutionary forces numbering 5000, commanded by so-called General Tubalcain Cardoso, proclaimed generalissimus, attacked garrison frontier at La Chorrerra. After eight hours desperate fighting, they abandoned camp, leaving 1000 dead, 1200 wounded. We lament irreparable losses, but still follow motto 'Progress and Brotherhood.'

Telegrapher, BOLANOS."

In Alcón's office new knocks were heard against the doors. It was Gacharnah, who was back from the telegraph bureau. Karlonoff opened the door for him, and when he entered, the noise and loud gossip of the adjoining offices could be heard from afar. He still wore that faded flower in his buttonhole, and carried a whip in his left hand, with which he had had to fight his way through the turbulent masses in the street. A strong perfume preceded him: the "Celestial" with which his handkerchief had been drenched:

"They stink! as Petronius would say, Señor Minister."

Then approaching him within earshot, and stealthily looking to right and left, not to be overheard, he said to Alcón:

"I conclude from the fact that news from the coast does not get through here, that the coast district is in favor of the Revolution and obeys Polanco, who is the ablest leader amongst the revolutionists. The Government needs vessels in order to move their troops by way of the sea, and because of this I once more repeat my offer of an excellent ship, armed for war, which can be in Colombian waters within a very short time. A cablegram would suffice. Four Armstrong guns, steel-clad, fifteen knots per hour. . . . It could, I suppose, be called the cruiser *Alcón*."

"All right, all right," said Alcón in a languid tone, and yawning, "it's true we need it. By to-morrow we can have concluded the bargain. There are only some formalities to be attended to."

The Minister yawned again, and by contagion Karlonoff and Gacharnah yawned likewise.

"Señor Minister, your honor is getting weak," said Gacharnah

with tender solicitude. "It is afternoon already, and you have taken no food since morning. Will you permit me . . . this is on my personal account . . . we shall have something brought here from the Sporting Club. . . . Only one minute, please."

He hurried off, diving into the dense multitude outside with his rotund paunch. Doctor Agüeros profited by this opportunity to confer with Alcón, and observed that he had already had the medicines taken to the storehouse, and that he at present had come to get an order for payment, and also to assume charge of his new office as chief of the Model Ambulance.

Alcón had the registry book brought to him, assumed a grave, solemn expression, and getting on his feet, he put the question to the Doctor:

"Do you swear to defend the Constitution and Laws of the Republic?"

But Agüeros, with a perfectly amiable gesture, broke in, proposing a formula somewhat altering the wording:

"I promise to fulfil my duty, on my word of honor, and I think that the noblest and the principal of these duties is to keep the revolutionaries correctly informed as to the movements of the Government."

"All right," said Doctor Alcón, seating himself again, and feeling satisfaction at the fact that he could give this noted opposition man a proof of his toleration.

There was a noise at the wall. Karlonoff ran to the telephone. Agüeros paid close attention, trying to reconstruct the dialogue from the abrupt phrases he listened to. Karlonoff was gesticulating as though he were making attempts to convert a rival.

"Whom am I talking with? . . . More distinctly. . . . Station? . . . What station? . . . of the railroad? . . . Yes, yes, . . . good. . . . Ready! . . . I say that I am ready! . . . General Borrero? . . . Good. . . . At this very time. . . . I am saying that at this very time. . . . Urgent. . . . Forced march. . . . No, sir. . . . Oh, well . . . if that is the way, it is all right. . . . What? The key? . . . Certainly, I forgot. . . . Take the key ABC, deducting twenty numbers. . . . Yes, twenty numbers. . . . All right, then. . . . With whom you are speaking? . . . With Colonel Karlonoff. . . . Yes, yes, yes. . . . Thank you! . . . Good-by."

In the adjoining office, the so-called banner room, a species of archive nearly always locked, the clatter and clicking of plates, dishes, and bottles began to be heard, and this music sounded very pleasant to Alcón, while he rapidly scanned a whole bundle of telegrams from the four corners of the whole Republic, most of them marked "very urgent," in which the governors, prefects, alcaldes, sent news regarding flights with revolutionary forces in which there was mention of thousands of dead, of places burned down, of the population trampled under-foot, of wholesale murder. . . .

Gacharnah, who had had a magnificent luncheon carried over, now made his appearance, half opened the door to the office, and motioned with his arms, showing the table set and the soup already smoking.

"Señor Minister," said he ingratiatingly, with the manner of a hotel manager or head waiter.

They went in, and Alcón, Agüeros, Karlonoff, and two aides-de-camp sat down. Three soldiers that moment came in, carrying more dishes and viands. Gacharnah turned and turned about, sometimes seated, again dancing about behind the table. . . . "This nice little white wine, Señor Minister?" . . . "You like a little more of this Burgundy?" . . . "Kidney a la Cardinal? Yes, I myself ordered it."

One of the orderlies placed upon the table a stupendous fowl, browned most deliciously at the fire.

"It is fattened, Señor Minister, and is one of those I breed on my own place," he said, and, indeed, the appetizing bird spread a most titillating aroma of truffles — a novel odor in that atmosphere where the smell of foolscap and legal papers had usually prevailed.

"Allow me to carve this bird," said Gacharnah, while he shoved his shirt cuffs higher.

"No, no," rejoined Agüeros, "this comes under the head of my new functions. . . ."

"Let us see, Doctor," put in Alcón, and bursting out in one of his rare fits of laughter, which so closely resembled the neighing of a horse.

"Let us see the scalpel of the Model Ambulance at work!" All fastened their eyes upon the physician, who with gravity,

as though getting ready for an operation of the greatest delicacy and requiring the highest skill, surrounded by a circle of assistants, now rolled back his sleeves, felt of the edge of his carving knife, and took careful note of the right point and where to pass the knife upon the surface of the fowl, just as if he were tracing the lines of the operation in advance. A short while after, instead of a bird, he had on the carving dish a heap of slices that were of tempting tenderness and delicate fiber. . . . But the aides-de-camp would not try these dainties. They felt a cold shiver run down their spines as they watched that implacable knife cutting with diabolical skill, that ambulance chief cutting deeply into the flesh. Karlonoff admired, but remained tranquil. He knew that in his position as Colonel Inspector of Bridges and Highways he would not have to leave the Capital, nor to trust himself to the good graces of Agüeros. Then the company sampled the beverages most extensively: white wines, red wines, darker wines. Merriment was universal. At the table, laughter and jolly jests were heard. All of the guests praised Gacharnah's *menu*, his excellent taste, his undeniable competency in all matters of gastronomy or stock raising. And he, rosy and smiling all over, letting his satisfaction ooze out at every pore, gave little familiar slaps on the shoulders of his neighbors with his chubby hands, treating the Minister likewise with easy familiarity, whereat Alcón frowned a bit; but Gacharnah went all about the table with the utmost good nature, his paunch triumphant, as usual. In his feverish brain Gacharnah saw millions of pesos crossing each other, and in his mind's eye he saw the word transmitted by him per cable in letters of fire, the word which meant to despatch the vessel armed for war: the word *Persification*.

The telegraph operator at this moment rose from his table and in silence took two telegrams to Alcón, who read them also in silence, and then left them on the table. Agüeros, while occupied carving the bird and distributing slices, by sidelong glances managed to make out the contents of the despatches in fragments, carving, conversing, answering, and reading slyly, as follows:

“This wing for the Señor Minister.”

To the Minister of War. The Revolutionists have taken the steamers . . .



“Colonel Karlonoff, I am giving you these tender cuts.”

taken the steamers and armed them . . .

“To be sure, friend, excellent Bordeaux wine.”

armed them for war purposes, have taken pos . . .

“Yes, friend Alcón, I have bathed in Ubaque. . . . Something more of the breast?”

taken possession of the river. . . .

“Thanks, I have already helped myself to some fish.”

The whole of Tolima under arms. . . .

“Well, I prefer champagne.”

The situation is most grave. . . .

“This salad for His Honor. . . . Another small piece? . . . There goes.”

Terencio Nichols has occupied the bridge in Girardot. . . .

Alcón took the telegrams, folded them calmly, put them with others into an envelope, handed that to one of the aides over his shoulder, and then wiped his mouth with the napkin.

“It is for General Ronderos. . . . It concerns him. . . . The salad is excellent.”

Gacharnah approached the table. With his supreme skill as a waiter he served Alcón with champagne, and murmured in a sweet and obsequious voice:

“A little ice for the Señor Minister’s champagne?”

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE FAMILY CRUCIFIX

THE last rays of the sun shone upon the dark dress of Doña Ana, and in the half shadow of the apartment her white head and her thin and bloodless hands were sharply defined. In an

attitude of abandon and fatigue, submitting to an excess of grief, she swallowed her tears, was sunk in her bitterness, conquered and prostrated by the sorrow that enwrapped her like a clinging garment. Roberto was taking his departure for the war that very night. Arriving at Ubaque, he had spoken to her of his leaving as of something probable, but afar off. Her heart, however, her faithful heart, which made her always divine the thoughts of her son, had told her that the hour of parting was drawing near.

Once in a while hope had seemed to smile on her, and she had almost forced herself to believe in a period of future happiness. Her soul, like those timid and colorless flowers that were born in the shade, began to assume a ruddy tint, began to open to a new sun, to an unknown sun, the sun of happiness. Her imagination, benumbed in the ice of adversity, had again unfolded its wings and attempted flight. In the midst of sweet dreams, she had seen the lost haciendas recovered. But then the awful words: "The scaffold! The rock!" would flit through her mind, and these words, bringing back memories of humiliation and torture, would become food for her pride and hauteur, because they represented the triumphant efforts of her son. She had seen herself once again in the old manorial house at Bogotá, surrounded by the shadows of her ancestors, encompassed by recollections, amidst those portraits installed for ages in the ancient drawing room where the high chairs and the damask hangings were forever occupying their places.

And another enchanting vision had come to her: the balcony, the roses of Castile which she herself would scatter upon Roberto and Inés amidst the sound of loving voices and the plashing of the cool waters in the fountain with its stone basin. . . . In the place of anxiety and worry there would be the felicity of Roberto, and a solid, indestructible fortune. And now, without any warning, while still basking in her own blissful dreams, when calm and confidence seemed so firmly established, . . . the war! Again taken unawares, again the anguish, the momentary expectation of frightful evil, the agony of suspense . . . the family fortune irremediably lost, . . . the specter of penury and indigence . . . desperation. All happiness and gaiety gone forever, dead, buried in a tomb whose crushing load the old lady felt weighing on her breast. A weight so gigantic, so enormous

that it ground her down in the dust and mire, that it crunched her very bones to powder, asphyxiated and throttled her, oppressed her heart, and annihilated her soul.

Silence reigned about her, a silence charged with menace, with sinister presentiments and tragic visions, images of what her inseparable companions were going to be as soon as Roberto should leave her: solitude and neglect.

The clock hanging on the wall with its monotonous and even tick-tack, which did not interrupt the silence but seemed to form a part of it, reminded Doña Ana of her own existence. With its expressionless chimes it appeared to discount life itself, to mark the atoms of eternity, and with its indifferent accents to ridicule the illusions of Doña Ana, recalling her own misfortunes, to count and recount her disappointments, to bring the moment of separation and enforced absence nearer and nearer, in order to continue thereafter monotonous, frigid, accompanying with the self-same tone laughter and tears, always counting the seconds, taking apart the tiniest fragments of eternity.

Doña Ana trembled nervously as the Angelus sounded in the adjoining tower, and she thought she could discover in that slow and plaintive sound, as though issuing from an infinite melancholy in space, the destiny of pain and grief which these bells spoke of now and were to speak of all the following evenings — a destiny which was bound to accomplish itself inexorably.

It was a disconcerting tune, sharp, shrill, humble, and in that fateful hour, facing the perspective of misery and definite disaster, it seemed to her as though it would always form a contrast in her recollection with the great bell of the cathedral in Bogotá which in a past that no one could ever bring to life again, had been steadily announcing festivities and rejoicings, as its clear and resonant voice had filled the apartments of the manorial home of the Ávilas.

The destiny of pain had to be fulfilled. The war had destroyed the family fortune, and it was now to rob her of Roberto as well. This was the last, the most formidable blow, and it was useless to try and resist, to struggle against fate. All that she could do was to resign herself mutely to omnipotent fatality. And in an outburst of anguish she turned her tortured eyes toward the Mater Dolorosa: "Most Holy Virgin,"

she wailed, "defend and protect my Roberto, and let him return safe to me!"

The soul of Doña Ana, habituated to sadness without tears and to anxious silence, to mute pain, had expanded with its trials, so that, in opening itself to compassion and bearing the stamp of real greatness, it harbored all the maternal tenderness, all human suffering, and seemed to accompany that night which was to bring such woe to mothers, all the sons departing on dangerous errands to distant places, to deadly climates and hunger and thirst and nakedness, surrounded by constant peril and terrible diseases in order to meet agony and death in wildernesses, in burning plains, on the battlefield, with no hand to close their eyes.

She heard Roberto's light step in the corridor. She straightened up in her chair and quelled the anguish of her heart. She did not wish to depress her son with her own melancholy, nor to break his spirit. Duty it was that obliged him to leave her, and it was necessary for him to go. Both by a tacit agreement avoided airing their sorrows, and giving loud and open expression to them. Both came of stock that knew how to face calamity, secret pain, death itself, with forehead high and heart whole, without cowardice or misgivings.

"Are you here, dear mother?"

They remained silent. The cold wind of January whistled through the chinks of the window, howled in the patio, carried from afar the shrill blast of a locomotive. The old clock on the wall, with an even pulsation, as of an insensible being, alien to all emotion, went on with its monotonous tick-tack . . . but suddenly it began to creak, wheels were heard to turn inside it dully, and then it struck slowly seven.

The silence still continued, and so did the strong west wind. The twigs of the bushes were lashed by it against the grating. The clock repeated the hour: the train, as if to remind Roberto that the hour had come, issued anew a long, piercing, dominant signal, and the echoes of the Monserrate gave it back.

Then Doña Ana rose, lifted her handsome white head, crossed the room with a firm step, and drew from her neck a golden crucifix attached to a ribbon. And while she put it on him, she kissed, at random, furtively, as though by accident, his fore-

head, cheeks, neck, rested her trembling hands on his breast and upon his palpitating heart. . . .

“It is the ancient crucifix of the family . . . with it your grandfather died . . . it was the last gift of your father . . . may it accompany you and bless you, son of my soul!”

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE MONUMENT TO THE DEAD

ALEJANDRO went busily about the apartments in his house, attending to the last preparations for his departure for the war. He reread and burned papers; assisted by a servant he packed his trunks, in which he also put a few books; he placed aside a sword which had already served him in two previous campaigns; and then he went to bid a last good-by to the monument which bore for him the vivid remembrance of the happiest moment of his life, that monument which was to him the sepulcher of his happiness. The monument to the dead! . . . What bitter and tragic feelings it awoke! He was thinking this suddenly, and then remembered that the present war was similar. The epoch of destruction and death which had begun anew for Colombia was symbolized, enclosed there, by that monument.

A colossal sepulcher it was, on one side and the other men, women and children who at the threshold of eternity move about, advance, kneel, prostrate themselves, are erect, according to their agony, their resignation, or their heroism. . . . Yes, those unfortunates who go to battle to die by thousands are here represented — those mothers, those wives, who follow them to camp and who perish there in pain and misery, those masses decimated by bullets and epidemics — they are all shown in this monument, they are standing there at the gate of eternity. . . . That central figure stretched out at full length in the crypt and over-spread by the vast shadow of Death — that is Colombia herself. Heroic dead, unknown and forgotten dead, humble dead over whose unenshrined ashes no cross and no token will arise. It will be for you survivors to remember, for you to erect for them both a monument and a grave. The common ditch into which the bones that the revolution has scattered all through the moun-

tains and the plains of Colombia could be piled on high, is not a worthy burial place.

There was heard in the deep silence of the room a trumpet blast, the trampling and clatter of horses, the passing of a squadron of cavalry. He rushed his preparations for starting, thinking with pain and sorrow of the fact that he must leave behind him all the amenities of home, his pictures, his books, to go and hurl himself into brutality and destruction, go where he must paddle in mud and blood, see wounds and tears, breathe the foul air of barracks, the distasteful fumes of the hospital.

He went out quickly, took a train, and in the agitation of the trip, crossing the low plains swiftly, at the side of General Ronderos, amidst the jingle of weapons, enveloped by the whole apparatus of an army, seeing the gleam of bright arms, of steel and the gay trappings of uniforms, his thoughts changed, and he felt the fascination of strife, the atavistic attraction of battle, the desire of removing obstacles, of being more skilful, more audacious, more persistent than the adversary.

General Ronderos was searching his pockets, and then drew out some papers which he handed to Alejandro.

"In the confusion of departure, of the hurry and bustle, I forgot to show you this telegram," he said. "Roberto has been prompt in attacking the enemy as soon as he arrived in Girardot."

"And . . . ?" said Alejandro.

The query was put with eagerness.

"Read! He sends good news," answered the General with that calm which a man maintains who has grown old under the emotions bred by war. And Alejandro read:

"Girardot, January 4. . . .

"General Ronderos . . . Bogotá.

"Instantly after our arrival here, at 8 A. M., shots were fired by sharpshooters placed on the iron bridge which they had partially dismantled and fortified. The enemy resisted until 4 P. M. The first battalion of Bogotá behaved with courage and audacity. Casanova decided the action with his men. We then crossed the bridge and went into camp at the other side of the river, at the hacienda La Gloria, where there are plenty of provisions for our troops.

"Unless ordered otherwise, I shall pursue the rebels, whom Socarraz with 500 mules has joined. Expósito Montes, Nerón Jaspe and Sinai Largacha have occupied Honda. Landáburu, who has proclaimed himself

provisional president, has taken Bodegas, seized a number of vessels, and has forcibly requisitioned coffee, hides, rubber. He fulfils his pledge: he loads his knapsack with fruits for exportation.

"Please communicate instructions.

"ROBERTO."

After reading the telegram, Alejandro interrogated General Ronderos:

"And is there no trace as yet of Bellegarde?"

"None."

"It is strange. Since the night at the Union Club not a single word from him."

"He was with me when Socarras made his attack on me. . . . He was intending to leave for Europe on the next day, but he has probably postponed his journey. . . . In times of such disorder as now, during such confusion, nobody knows anything of the other; we must continue to inquire after him."

They arrived at the terminal of the railroad, and left the train. Alejandro flew to the telegraph office, and there was handed a despatch from Roberto, dated at La Gloria. He read:

Here goes now on his uncertain road  
He who with his soul cherishes thee,  
And hopes when death seizes thee,  
To welcome thee at the great port  
Called, like this one, La Gloria.

After getting the whole army underway on the road to Honda, Ronderos and Alejandro, while the mules outside trotted past their shelter, had some conversation.

"Frankly," said the General, "the situation of the Government is serious. Cardoso, although defeated in a first engagement, will return with larger forces. The entire Republic is on fire. But the most serious point is that the revolutionary armies have taken possession of the river, and that with Honda, Barranquilla and other harbors, the entire communication with the coast and even with the outside world has been cut. The customs duties, provisions, all resources. . . ."

"The first thing, General, will be to take Honda."

"Doubtless; we are going to do that very thing."

"And then?"

"Then sweep them from the plains of Tolima, proceed to

Antioquia, and next make our way, on shore, if we have no river route open to us, to the Atlantic Coast."

"But the river, . . ." suggested Alejandro. "Don't you think it would be best to flank them, occupy some of the harbors along there, and thus interrupt the communications of the revolutionary forces?"

"Certainly. You yourself will take charge of that. You will enter by the mountains of Antioquia, then turn towards the river by the forest road, You will then seize the harbor of Borja, which you know better than any one. After that we shall see."

There arrived a battalion which had left the capital on the previous evening. The soldiers, bathed in perspiration, and nearly prostrated by the heat and powerful sunlight, saluted their chief with enthusiastic acclamations.

Ahead, disappearing and then reappearing in the turns of the road leading up the hillside, could be seen the outlines of Doctor Miranda, and near him the snow-white hoods of the Sisters of Charity.

After three days' march, during which several sutlers died from sunstroke, the army arrived, under a sky of brass, at the shores of the Magdalena River, opposite Honda.

General Ronderos and Alejandro, accompanied by a suite of aides-de-camp, made reconnaissance under the fire of the enemy. The Revolutionaries had destroyed the suspension bridge, the cables of which were deep in the water. The forces of Landá-buro, Montes, Jaspe and Largacha had taken possession of some houses on the opposite bank, or else they had dug trenches for themselves up on the heights, behind long parapets formed with the planks taken from the bridge or with the sleepers of the railway.

Ronderos aligned his troops between some morasses in which the soldiers had hidden themselves up to their chins, and on top of a rocky hill which commanded the positions of the adversary.

"General," said Alejandro, "there are still some of our troops in the rear. Do you want to wait for them?"

"No, Alejandro," he answered, without halting his horse. "Here are our guns already. . . . Just see how quickly those officers of the Grenadiers are working! The thunder of our big pieces will soon call those delayed detachments."



From the mules were now unloaded the wheels, the caissons, and soon the batteries were in readiness, with their conical piles of ammunition beside them. The gunfire began.

A flash. A big hole torn. A trembling as of an earthquake. It shook the air as far as the utmost confines of the horizon. A thousand echoes repeated the tremendous roar with incessant repercussion. The shells crossed the wide river with a humming sound, and buried themselves on the opposite shore, making gaps in the trenches, or smashing the small houses to fragments. Pillars of smoke, which the wind swept away, and between which, now and then, small white crowns were floating.

General Ronderos shuddered with a mixture of martial joy and sorrow, for these guns to his mind had in this new era of blood and pain a voice which insulted and which groaned, which threatened the enemy and which muttered a *de profundis* for the dead.

Scarcely had the rifle shooting begun, when the chief of Junin fell. They carried him to some distance among the rearguard, and placed him in the large room of a small house prepared for the ambulance by Doctor Miranda and the Sisters of Charity. The priest bent over the wounded man.

"Where?" he murmured.

"Here, Doctor, in the chest. . . ."

He opened his shirt, and the blood began to run on the floor.

He grasped his wound with the left hand, and with the right pressed the arm of the priest. The latter understood his wish, and he bent over him to hear the confession of the dying man.

After a short while, being almost unable to articulate, he whispered:

"Doctor, they fight stoutly."

The noise of the battle was heard even here. One could clearly distinguish the tack-tack of the scattered rifle fire; again, the discharges in mass, the dull booming of the guns, the regular hammering of the machine guns. Other wounded men began to arrive. The little house was very soon full of blood, of moans and of dying gasps. The heat in it grew and became asphyxiating. The Sisters of Charity came first, and next the surgeons and their assistants. The ambulance service was being organized on the spot.

Sister San Ligorio, in the midst of heartrending shrieks, of sobs and despair, in spite of the pools of blood everywhere, went on washing the wounded, binding up the wounds, refreshing the parched throats, the pale, dry lips, wiping off the sweat of the dying and speaking within the hearing of these unfortunate fellow creatures words of resignation and of hope.

During the first few moments Doctor Miranda had to master himself. The transition was too sudden. He had passed from hymn books to the battlefield, from being a master-Hellenist to these scenes of horror, from his study to the position of chaplain in the army, and from a life of deepest peace to one of unspeakable terror, to this small hall crowded with suffocating men whose wounds caused them to emit notes of pain almost unlike anything human. But quickly these feelings disappeared, and Doctor Miranda felt springing up within him a new kind of enthusiasm, the consciousness of a new type of vocation, and he accepted his burden with heroism, almost with joy.

His cassock stained with blood, and his hands likewise smeared with it, he nevertheless was everywhere, comforting, helping, blessing; he lent a willing hand in transporting the wounded, in placing them on the operation table, where the surgeons and their assistants swiftly cut off arms and legs that fell to the ground and were pushed contemptuously aside with the foot. The operators dived with their forceps deep into the fearful wounds made by bullet or shot, and then they just as quickly sewed together the ragged edges of bleeding flesh, while red jets of blood spurted out meanwhile. The priest heard with horror how the terrific noise of the battle went on unabated, and saw with similar feelings how the stream of new arrivals, mostly with ghastly wounds, went steadily on.

Already the assistant surgeons, their sleeves tucked up to the elbows, their arms bespattered with the dreadful fluid, no longer took the pains to have the wounded carried first to the operation table, but kept on instead working among these poor fellows with haste, with a mechanical skill, as though they were dead bodies, soulless, unfeeling, medical preparations.

One assistant surgeon, without paying any attention whatever to the patient's roars of pain, extracted a bullet from the stomach of a captain who was stretched out on the soil outside upon a pile of straw, the latter reddening more and more with his fast

flowing blood, while another wounded man followed with curiosity and horror the play of the scalpel and was waiting his own turn, having meanwhile been placed carelessly with his back against the wall. Suddenly the captain began to gurgle, to vomit blood. Others filled the little house with their groans, their dismaying cries, their death rattles.

One of the wounded, placed sitting in the corridor, with one of his legs shattered, recovered strength for a moment, leaned on his elbow, and listened attentively to the turmoil of battle.

"How splendidly the machine guns are working," he said.

A spent bullet hit an ox loaded with munition, and the animal crumpled its hide, lashed with its tail, as though to chase away an insect, then doubled up slowly, fell prostrate on its own load, and the whites of its eyes began to show. Then it commenced to groan softly in a dull sort of way, and its agony began, as though to protest against the evil deeds of man.

Alejandro went at great speed to bring up a battalion that had not yet arrived at the battlefield.

"Come on, boys," he encouraged them with a shout.

He put new life into them, made them follow him at quick-step, and when they got up to the battle line, when the bullets began to whistle about them, he turned to the military band that was marching in front of them, and called out:

"Let's have the national hymn, quick, or anything else, a lively march or a bambuco."

The musicians put their instruments to their mouths without further ado, and played the victory march from *Aida* with a vim, the stirring notes of this march mingling with the thunder of the cannons, the latter seeming to mark the rhythm.

And then Alejandro, quite suddenly, inspired doubtless by the music, saw the following image arise in his memory: the theater, a night of opera, the house overcrowded, gaiety, life, waves of light making the diamonds on the snowy necks of the ladies sparkle, the faces in the immense audience standing out clearly against the red background of plush and gold in the boxes, and on the stage the triumphal entry of Rhadames. . . .

The soldiers went into battle full of spirit, headed by Alejandro who, feeling the rich blood of his forebears boiling in his veins, drew himself up proudly in his saddle, rose in his stir-

rups, and launched himself into the thick clouds of powder smoke.

On every side he noted minute details while riding along the ranks of these men drenched in sweat, breathing an air of fire, deafening the atmosphere with the ceaseless roar of the guns.

He came to a small hill. There a machine gun went on tack-tacking without cease. The soldier who handled the mechanism of it fell, another instantly replaced him, but he also was killed. The bullets fell in a perfect shower upon this group of men, and they began to give way. One of them rose, ran away without his headpiece, then stopped, turned around and never got up again. Alejandro dismounted, brought another squad of men, and started them anew handling the gun. He went on up and down the battle line, always in an atmosphere that was both dim and hot. Thus he also arrived at the hillock where the artillery was stationed, almost perishing with thirst, and feeling the tickling of the acrid gunpowder smoke in his throat. From this height he cast a sweeping glance backwards: towards the huge cyclones of dun smoke, the horrible nightmare of it all: a bizarre mixture of the scarlet of uniforms, the purple of spilt blood, the blue of jackets, the glitter of arms, the flashes of musket and gunfire, the trees destroyed and torn to unsightly stumps by bursting shells, the horses prone on the slippery ground and convulsively struggling there in their death agonies, wounded men who crawled painfully along between puddles of dusky water, soldiers who ran for life, others who moved about feverishly, who appeared and then were again swallowed up in the dim reek of smoke; faces inflamed with passion, perspiring faces, faces disfigured, pallid, grimy, stained with blood and mud, faces convulsed by anger, fear, passion, all half hidden by this all-embracing cloud of battle. And then the dead, lying there with glassy eyes, with limbs distorted, with clenched fists, in unnatural, in ludicrous, in dramatic postures, mouth open, showing the teeth as if in a mocking smile.

He went and stood amidst the batteries. One commandant directed the handling of two new Hotchkiss guns which shone in the sun. This man went from one to the other, with enthusiasm, with youthful motions, with catlike agility. He made them load, then pointed the gun with glee, burst into loud laugh-

ter at every discharge. Then he would follow the course of the projectile in silence, would gaze attentively towards the opposite shore, and then observing the gap made there somewhere, seeing perhaps the big cloud of dust raised by the shot in the trenches over there, or a number of frightened soldiers fleeing from a house just hit, he would laugh with a hideous kind of merriment and abandon, then would run back to the battery, as if acknowledging a favor, would bend over his piece, and upon the hot mouth of the cannon he would place his powder-blackened hand lovingly, patting it in approval.

"Just look, General Borja," he would say, "this new shot!"

He bent again over his gun, adjusted the sight on it, knelt on the ground, laughingly rose, then took one step backwards, threw his arms wide, and fell without a sound, with a red point in his forehead. Over on the other side they concentrated now their fire upon the flat top of the hill where the guns were stationed. A number of the artillerists fell dead or wounded within a short space of time, and red spots gleamed among the straw stacks used to disguise the position of the batteries. Just then General Ronderos came up, quiet and cheerful. The bullets were still raining down, but the General rode at a short trot along the brow of the hill, again and again, ignoring the danger, tranquil and thoughtful, as he used to do when riding among his pastures at *La Laguna*. The aides-de-camp came and went with precipitation, spoke to Ronderos with anxiety, with enthusiasm, then turned their steeds with spasmodic zeal, and went back at a gallop, and their hurried gestures, their evident worry contrasted strongly with the even step of the stout horse, with the serenity of the old veteran. Suddenly the General halted his mount, turned slowly to Perucho, his orderly and trumpeter, who put his trumpet to his lips, inflated his cheeks, and listened to the order.

"Cease fire!"

On the other shore, upon the mud wall of a house, through a curtain of bluish smoke dimly visible, a white flag was fluttering. The trumpet blast was repeated, and little by little the firing died away. Then was heard on the other side of the river a second blast . . . the signal for a parley.

Soon after the white flag could be seen coming down the hillside, and at last arrived at the shore. Next a big boat started

from the bank and crossed the river obliquely. Alejandro with his field glass carefully observed the route of the vessel on the river. He noticed the hard task the rowers had to overcome the strong current, the flash of the sunlight on the wet paddles that ran with bright drops of water. The boat arrived, and the emissaries sprang ashore.

"Hello!" exclaimed Alejandro, who kept on watching them with his glass, "it is 'Social Reason' Vidaurre and Villafañe."

They came up. General Ronderos took his horse slowly to the shade of an immense poplar.

"Señor General," said Vidaurre, "we come in behalf of peace."

"We carry," spoke up Villafañe, "these papers here from General Landáburu, who makes the patriotic proposition to conclude a political pact which would put an end to the present war."

Ronderos, without opening his lips, took one of the papers, read it, and handed it to Alejandro. The latter read:

"Commander's headquarters of the terro-fluvial army.

"Provisional Presidency of the Republic, Presidential Palace,

"Honda, January 6, . . .

"Senor General Pedro Alcantara Ronderos,

in his encampment.

"Greatly esteemed Friend and General:

"Above all, I hope that you will cause the fire against me to be suspended, and order that your pieces of artillery will not expose this historic city to destruction, without any advantage to yourself. Yes, for my part, I shall not fire upon your forces any longer. I give you my word to be here, without moving my troops, until your arrival. I am greatly desirous of conferring amicably with you alone. You can safely pass the river without being fired upon. Only be sure to float a white flag in the canoe that will convey you, or else give the signal of an admiral's salute if you should happen to come at night time. You may bring with you two aides-de-camp and one trumpeter. Upon my word of a general and provisional president I promise that both your honor and your life shall be respected.

"Your friend and compatriot,

"F. LANDÁBURU."

Ronderos dismounted, his aides surrounded him. The messengers thought he was going to dictate some communication or other, when they heard the General say, very calmly and with a smile:

"Alejandro, let us take a glass of beer with these gentlemen!"

A case of it was opened, and Ronderos drank the beer with avidity.

"I am parched," he said.

Then he seemed to consider the proposed truce as a thing of secondary importance.

"Friends," he said, seating himself upon a big load of war stores, "tell Señor Landáburo that I give him one hour to surrender, for that would be the best means to avoid further bloodshed."

He asked for another glass of beer, slowly drank it with appetite, and said after a short pause:

"Tell him that the surrender will be unconditional, but that I offer Landáburo and his troops complete amnesty, as also the means to return home. This, according to my notion, is a simple particular, but I shall not accept any political pact." Here the speaker asked that his horse be brought, and continued. "I do not make a pact with disorder."

He mounted his horse, looked silently at his watch, and put spurs to his animal.

"General," exclaimed Vidaurre, when General Ronderos had already proceeded some distance, "his excellency, the Provisional President, has given us verbal instructions to declare that he wants to avoid the shedding of additional blood, of fraternal blood, that he wishes the country to be spared more ruin and tears."

"Well, then, let him surrender!" cried the General phlegmatically, and he dug the spurs into his horse in order to ride to the shore where the soldiers were drinking very noisily, taking large draughts, while standing upon the burning sand, and where they cooled face, hands and chest in the river.

Villafañe called Alejandro aside, and said:

"General, I should like to leave for the Capital. Landáburo has made us believe that this war would be a very short one, that the Government army was unreliable; but it seems to me that hostilities will drag on. If you could have a passport to Bogotá made out for me . . ."

"In an instant, my friend," said Alejandro, "and even with assistance for your journey."

"Things over there," then remarked Villafañe, while he had

signaled the opposite shore, "are entirely at odds. General Montes arrived here on January 1, seized Honda, also the steamers, and began to organize an army. We were quite united, but two days later Landáburu appeared, proclaimed himself provisional president, asked to be recognized by us, and some of us said yes, others no, while the army, too, split into halves; the two generals have threatened each other with their revolvers, the lucky provisional president was meanwhile mainly busy in confiscating all the exportable fruit, and then having it loaded on board the steamers bound for the coast. . . . In a word, I am going to return to my office."

So Villafañe mounted his horse and took the road for Bogotá, itching for fat war commissions, for percentages, premiums and discounts; he was thinking, while he went up towards Consuelo, that up there at the Capital at these times it would be much easier to pile up a fortune within a brief time, and that even without running the risks of war.

Vidaurre embarked for the other shore, with the white flag floating conspicuously at the bow of the boat. He could be seen going up the steep hill in zigzag fashion, entering a house. Shortly after, below Honda, could be heard the whistling of the steamers.

"Listen, friend," said Ronderos to Alejandro, "all the enemy wanted was to profit by a truce to make his escape. They are making good their flight this very instant. It is impossible to capture them now. I know the trick. I never seriously believed in the honest intentions of these two messengers."

Soon after some boats started from the opposite bank, which offered their services in transferring the Government army to Honda.

The rowers which the Generals Montes, Largacha and Jaspé had made use of, told that their forces were seen to march off in the direction of the plains of Tolima, and that Landáburu, with all the steamers he had been able to seize, including the *Bellegarde* and the *Inés*, had escaped by the way of the lower river, with Puerto Borja their objective point. Profiting by the long twilight, the troops of Ronderos began to cross the river, and while the bridge was once more put in serviceable condition, the soldiers were transferred in boats, the cattle swimming over, tied to the prow of each vessel. As soon as the town had been



occupied, General Ronderos sent forces to be under the command of Alejandro, in order to pursue those guerrilla bands that very night.

"Poor fellows," observed the General, watching the various detachments filing past, "they are tired out, exhausted from the engagement of to-day, but it cannot be helped; it is necessary to put the rearguard in pursuit of the enemy, profiting by the enthusiasm aroused by our victory. For if the forces of Montes should join those of Socarras and then together attack Roberto, he would be in great danger. Therefore we must go to his help."

Night fell at last.

Doctor Miranda, accompanied by the Sisters of Charity, as well as by a number of orderlies, began his search for the casualties that had been left behind by the Revolutionaries, entrusted to the mercy of their adversaries. Together they first followed the river line, looked closely along the whole shore, then over the stubble fields; they climbed up and down, passed the trenches, the redoubts, the houses which the machine guns had swept and demolished, then went down into the declivities and gullies, up again to the tops of the bluffs, once more down to the depths, and then at random among the mists of the heights, always guided by the cries and groans of the wounded, by the murmured plaints of the dying, by their prayers and sighs and pitiful sobs. Then they would be tottering with the rigid bodies of those beyond all help, touching in the dark the cold cheeks of corpses. From the depths of the canebrake there issued a plaint that seemed to be diminishing in strength, but sounded most pitiful in the dark night. When Doctor Miranda drew near, bent over and saw, the pale light of the lantern fell upon a body all besmeared with blood, the hands shaking and lifted in supplication, and a face that was already bathed in the shadows of death. This wounded man opened eyes that were dilated by a great hope, seemed to beg with his ghastly gaze. Then he made a supreme effort to rise, but a stream of blood burst out of his mouth, drenching the priest's cassock, and the hand which sought his was getting icy cold. There also appeared in the wilderness of tall rushes near the river and then was lost again in the shadows a woman who had a baby asleep in her arms, and with a dull moaning that never left her lips,

she kept on searching among all these wounded and dead for a loved face.

Then they brought all of the unfortunates they had found back to camp, and all the night the black cassock and the snowy hoods, lit up by the feeble rays of the lanterns, like fantastic visions, like wandering souls on their journey, crossed and re-crossed the hidden places in the hills, searching for more abandoned ones, and ever they would reappear where groans and sighs weakly hung on the night air. And from the whole field of battle there broke a desolate cry, a penetrating wail, a lament without end, inarticulate words, blasphemies, curses, howls, mystic invocations, whispered prayers, cries inaudible, complaints interminable.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### INCENDIARIES

THE army goes winding slowly its snakelike trail along hollowed out paths, along sparse, withered stalks of dead vegetation. The heat, the murderous fatigue of forced marches, have stilled the voices, driven away smiles and laughter. They all crawl along mute, sad, perspiring like a flock of tired sheep.

Day after day the army has traversed the plains of Tolima, those interminable plains, showing nothing but rigid, sickly stalks, so infertile that not even the horses and cattle can find sustenance there. Day after day they have vainly longed to reach the end of their miseries. Day after day they have traveled beneath a burning sky. Always the same crude light, always the same naked glowing disk in the heavens, implacable, devouring. Day after day they have tried to escape that fire in air and sky that is eating up their marrow, that puts fever into their veins, that scorches their lips, that murders their sleep, that paralyzes their will power, that prostrates and exhausts. The open prairie, always before their eyes the desert plain, with its bare and hopeless monotony. All the colors revealing health, strength and cheerfulness have gone. In their place nothing is visible but wan and grimy faces. The sun has burned them, has desiccated them and drunk up their blood. These are all

countenances as of a hospital on the march. All have the color of ashes, the same ashes which mark the route here and there, the sterile yellow of sand, the pallor of the withered vegetation that is all around them.

It is now a whole month that Alejandro and Roberto, at the head of an army worn out by fatigue, hunger, sleeplessness and fever, pursue in the midst of the devastated plains, with neither truce nor rest, the forces of Socarraz, who with extraordinary agility manages to concentrate them, disperse them, to attack and to disappear. Two days before, they had succeeded in surrounding the guerrilla chief, and when, after unheard-of efforts, they prepared to close the net and capture him and his band, he contrived by means unknown to give them the slip once more, to evade his pursuers. Thus the tracking of him had to begin all over again, and just now, making a new supreme effort, they were for another time in his wake, trying to intercept him before he should reach the river. Two nights now the soldiers had had no sleep, being constantly on the march, interrupted solely a few times by brief halts in order to slaughter a few head of cattle which then were roasted at an open fire and cut up and eaten standing. . . . Some of the soldiers, with their lids closed, with burning, troubled eyes, with hurried respiration, and half suffocated, had fallen in their tracks, conquered by the lack of sleep, remaining on the ground with mouth open, and with congested faces. The officers had to shake them, roughly awaken them, help them to rise, and to remind them that a straggler was a dead man. Then, picking up their rifles, these poor fellows would get on their feet without a murmur, shake the dust from their knapsacks, and follow the others, tottering, silent, like sleepwalkers.

Quite in front there are a number of young fellows, some of them smaller than the rifles they carry, bowed down over their drums, over their bugles and some bundles of swords. Then, at irregular intervals, come the troops proper. The officers who raise swarms of gnats and other insects with long wings, try listlessly to cheer on the mules who with drooping ears let fall big drops of sweat on the burning sand.

On top of the huge munition boxes are carried hunks of meat blackened by exposure to the sunlight, hampers filled with provisions, piles of firewood, just what a tribe of nomads needs in

crossing the desert. A number of mules come next, bearing no load, but exhibiting on the loins and on their protruding ribs shapeless sores, monstrous lumps, swellings which are oozing with viscous blood. Around them are buzzing clouds of mosquitoes. Little chaps scarcely big enough to take care of themselves, are on the backs of sumpter horses shaking with the motions of the animals as these proceed at the slow gait of the marching line, and these boys are dressed up grotesquely in corporals' or sergeants' uniforms. The camp women are carrying hand baggage, calabashes, and often on their bosoms their emaciated babies who in vain are seeking nourishment at their mothers' dried-up breast. All of these women look like gipsies, with skin and complexion browned by the sun, eye sockets abnormally enlarged by lack of sleep and rest, and also by insufficient food, almost bloodless, and stopping now and then to wipe the sweat from their perspiring faces, which they do with bed-sheets they wear wrapped around their necks. Then they take a whistling breath, and when they have leisure, lie down with their arms as pillows, or else attempt to find some cooler spot, putting their cheeks against the leaves of some wayside plant.

Quite in the rear, alone by themselves, creeping along, forming pitiful groups, with cadaverous countenances, come the wounded and sick. Those who have injuries on the feet are walking with the aid of staffs or stripped branches picked up on the road, or else are leaning on the stock of their rifles, making their way painfully, resting the foot often on the uninjured side, with bent heads, bowing down, and fanning themselves at every step with the flaps of their hats that hide or reveal faces which tell of atrocious sufferings.

Doctor Miranda, afoot and mingling in the ranks with the men, speaks encouraging words to the despairing and tired, counsels the enfeebled and sick, puts new heart into the marching soldiers. There he drops a simple phrase of compassion, here he gives an affectionate pat on the shoulder of one exhausted, further on says a pleasant or jocular word, and the soldiers begin to smile with new hope, draw themselves up erect, feel refreshed, ready for new sufferings, ready even for death. And seeing the effect of his words, of the magical influence of his voice, the priest himself is moved, and lavishes his own religious faith, mingled with affection, on the men. The bril-

liancy of his glance is veiled by the tears that will come to his eyes, and his lips smile with an expression of bitterness and sadness. Sometimes a soldier will call him aside to make some confidential communication, fervent confessions, about sins committed long ago, or sharp presentiments, or explosions of grief that find a sympathetic echo in the depths of that heart aflame with divine love. And the priest will listen to them in this manner, one by one, during the march, and will make these souls stronger to bear the inevitable, will strengthen them the more as fatigue tortures them, will deepen their hopes the more if despair assails them, if affliction bears down on them.

"Poor fellows! Just look, Alejandro!" exclaimed Roberto. "They can scarcely endure this any longer. Could we not encamp here?"

"Impossible! We should thereby lose the fruits of our present extraordinary efforts. It is indispensable for us to reach the Magdalena River before Socarraz does. At present we may hope that not a single man of them will escape us. I do not think they can be far from here."

"Well, then, let us go on."

They strained their eyes towards the distance. In the torpid atmosphere there were floating particles of remote conflagrations, cinders, soot, fine ashes. A bluish mist hid the horizon from their gaze.

"Yonder is Palmares," said Alejandro. "It seems to me I can scent the bivouac of Socarraz. Let us investigate."

"Over on the other side, on the right," said Colonel Ávila, "I make out a column of thick smoke . . . yonder, quite in the distance, and a glow as of reddish waves."

"It is another place set afire."

"Socarraz scatters fire and pestilence for his allies."

Certain black shapes could now be remarked in the plains. They were coming in the direction of the army. The clusters of fugitives grew in size and number. They were people who had been driven away without knowing where to go. Their faces wore an expression of terror, their arms were stretched out as if seeking help. They were unfortunates who came dragging along their sole possession — a cow, or a pig. There was an old woman who did not even possess a head-covering, carrying a small child in her arms, and next to her a tall old woman with

gray braids and the aspect of a witch, clutching some ragged articles of clothing beneath her bare arms that were crossed and recrossed by dark veins. They drew nearer, they halted with fear, glanced behind them, saw the sky alight with the ruddy flames, and turned once more determinedly, continuing their road, desperate, without further reflexion, making gestures of complete desolation.

Doctor Miranda stepped out of the ranks, approached these fugitives, and spoke to them like a father. He advised them what to do, offered them protection, and then these unhappy people began to relate what had happened to them. They showed the tall pillar of smoke, surrounded the priest, knelt to him, kissed his hand, and burst out in sobs.

The fugitive villagers were received within the army, and the latter proceeded slowly. Roberto and Alejandro, who walked in the rear, in order not to abandon their wounded and sick, now noticed with astonishment a bivouac but recently abandoned, stakes on which slaughtered cattle had been roasted, piles of intestines covered with flies, boiling in the heat of the sun in the midst of huge pools of half dried blackish blood; and crowding about all this, numbers of vultures that were gorged and unafraid, as though they were familiar companions to army life.

Further forward the repugnant odor of burned hides and wool assailed the nostrils. Between black clouds there was still smoldering the sorry remains of a little cabin. Across the threshold of the reeking ruins of his humble little structure, face buried in the ashes, lay a young lad, his feet scorched and the skin of the back broken and swollen with fearful blisters. A number of vultures retired with silent bounds, glancing at the meal they had left. Within the straw were stretched out the lifeless bodies of an old man and a young one. The old man, whose biblical white beard was deeply stained with blood, showed a terrific knife thrust which had pierced the forehead and the cheek, while the young one, lying in a pool of blood, showed a strong back marked with sword blows, the latter crossed with black stripes, and at the neck a formidable slash which had left the head barely hanging by a tendon.

"That is the signature of the Escorpión," remarked Chispas, approaching the two chiefs. "He cannot be far, for the blood is still fresh."

Some shots were heard in the vanguard, and there was a scuffle. Casanova arrived in haste.

"General, they are in Palmares, and no longer here," he said. "They have taken refuge on the river. We shall capture them."

Blasts on the trumpet; commands; shouts of rage.

The trumpet of the lancers is heard. Chispas hastily rode toward a small group of palms which rose on the horizon, close to the river.

The first battalion of Bogotá, with rifles held ready, started at quick-step, Casanova cheering them on. The battalions were formed in fighting line and hastened forward. In the silence of the surrounding landscape could be clearly heard the metallic rattle of the cartridges that were being inserted in the rifles. A breeze carried the fresh scent of the vegetation along the Magdalena River, and bore the echo of shots fired somewhere.

"Come on, boys," encourages Alejandro, "a last effort, and the campaign will be over!"

They arrive, but they find the camp of Socarraz empty. The guerrilla men have succeeded in escaping, have even crossed the Magdalena. They fire upon the last vessels just crossing the river.

In the midst of these shots, Chispas, red with anger and indignation, spurs on his horse, pricks him with his lance to induce him to trust to the current in pursuit of the guerrilla chieftain who has a second time effected his flight.

"He has run away, the accursed scoundrel," shouts Chispas; "they were here, they crossed the river, . . . they kept boats ready."

There are some shots fired from the other shore, near the forest border, and these indicate that the enemy is in safety. Then they hear the trumpet signal of Socarraz.

All pursuit is impossible and dangerous. Alejandro resolves to strike camp. At the signal of the trumpeter, the soldiers align themselves, then break ranks, and run towards the water, where they bend over the waves, drink their fill with much noise, breaking out in shouts of merriment, while the women run to the shore, dip their calabashes into the water, and when the clucking of the inflowing water follows, they accompany it with bursts of laughter.

The waters of the great river spread out majestic and splendid. The sinking sun paints upon the vast surface great patches of scarlet, and the breeze forms long folds on the water. The enormous disk of the sun seems to be steeped in a lake of blood. In the lake the air is already beginning to melt into velvety darkness. The details are hiding behind the veil which twilight drops over the scene. The tall rushes are undulating idly in a lazy wind. Roberto, stretched out at full length in a hammock, saw the day sadly die and be swallowed up in the immense fog banks which were empurpled by the sinking sun and by the great incendiary fires blazing not far away. And as the night advanced and grew, the glitter of the flaming village likewise grew. As far as the zenith grand impenetrable clouds of sable smoke rose and displayed their red spirals, inside of which twirling and twisting showers of white, glistening sparks were constantly carried upwards only to fall abruptly like a cataract of fire.

Not far from the river, amidst a small grove of palms, there were two spacious houses which Socarraz had fortified by closing and barring all the windows. In these buildings Socarraz had left all his wounded and sick, and these comprised all those from the army of the Government and those who had remained behind during the shooting that afternoon in the camp.

It was scarcely possible to move about in that abode of pain.

From that great mass of maimed, disfigured, and crippled bodies there arose an incessant murmur of agony, a fantastic mingling of howls, a flutter of rapid, feverish breathing, raucous cries, dull gaspings.

In an asphyxiating, heavy atmosphere as hot as that of an oven, there floated the emanations of a thousand deadly diseases, of ulcers and gangrene, the filth of entrails rendered poisonous by the fever, sweating bodies, all combined with the penetrating odor of iodoform.

The Sisters of Charity lavished here, with the doubtful light of some tallow candles, their best attentions on these unfortunates, without a gesture of disgust or dismay, calm and happy as though they were traversing a royal hall peopled with persons enjoying wealth and station, and full of music and perfumes.

Roberto and Alejandro having gone as far as the entrance



to this primitive establishment, fled before the first fetid, superheated breath issuing out of its door.

Seized with respect and veneration, Alejandro remained on the threshold. Sister San Ligorio having passed him, he had given her a glance. From her emaciated face had disappeared the traces of sadness and homesickness. She seemed to descry the end of her exile; in her eyes there shone the light of another world, a glow of superhuman bliss. Amid those shadows of death, those moans of agony, she was like a compassionate angel sent to bestow supreme consolation for supreme pain.

Fascinated by that glance, infected with a heroic madness, inflamed by a sudden call for charity, Alejandro resolutely penetrated the hospital, and conquering all his repugnance he drew near to those human bodies in which the spark of life was still aflame, and treated them all with affectionate consideration. Most of the patients were already at death's door, however. Like the humblest and most forlorn of the male attendants, and filled with joy at the chance of being able to overcome his instincts, Alejandro did all sorts of common labor: stanching the flow of blood, distributed medicines and sympathetic counsel, and tended the patients, washing their wounds and binding them up.

From a dark nook of the place there came shrill cries, mingling wails with blasphemies and insults. Alejandro approached. It was a guerrilla soldier, wounded that afternoon during the rifle fire, who had been unable to cross the river. Recognizing Alejandro, he broke out in horrible curses.

Sister San Ligorio came up, and knelt down at the side of the bed. And her voice was clearly to be heard amidst the shouting and screeching of the man on the bed — her voice full of unshed tears that penetrated to the very bottom of the soul and caused it to vibrate with the deepest and most delicate sentiments. The sister's eyes were fixed upon those of the raging man, who at last felt their fascination until he ceased his furious outbreak. Then he fell to complaining of his pain and his lot, and finally began to sob and ask for pity. With the soldier reduced to that state, Alejandro was able to obtain from him some details.

Socarraz, it seems, had made good his escape with all his men, and had safely crossed the river. He had lately not moved with his guerrilla band as rapidly as formerly, because he had been

embarrassed in his march by the hundred mules he had with him, loaded with coffee and hides, and had at last been forced to leave him wounded and a stranger from whom he never separated himself, and who was likewise sick, in the houses of Palmeras.

"A stranger?" exclaimed Roberto, surprised. "Where was he taken prisoner?"

"The night we picked up old Ronderos at the Union."

"Ah, Bellegarde!" remarked Roberto, quite taken aback.

"That is what the man said. . . . Socarraz did not want to let him go, although he had offered a considerable ransom for himself. I believe that something must have occurred between those two, and that the attack at the Union Club was meant more for Bellegarde than for old Ronderos."

"We must rescue Bellegarde!" cried Roberto. "What fate is awaiting him else!"

"This night we cannot do so," said Alejandro, holding the other back. "How are we to cross the river? But to-morrow we shall use those barks that Socarraz has left behind for forcing a passage, and then we shall pursue him without rest or delay until we can liberate the Count, my unfortunate, my beloved friend."

"I bring here this letter," said Casanova, coming up suddenly at this juncture, and saluting Alejandro with his sword. A messenger from General Ronderos handed it to me during the time of our attack."

General Ronderos had sent them his orders and some important news from his camp at one of the settlements in the mountain district, as follows:

He had with a part of his army pursued the guerrilla bands of Expósito Montes, Nerón Jaspe, and Nichols, forcing them to separate from Socarraz, and pushing them towards the chain of mountains, where the enemy forces had scattered, leaving in the possession of the Government the larger part of their provisions and war material. The chiefs Montes, Jaspe, Lagacha and Nichols had contrived to find safety, fleeing by way of the mountains until they had reached the lower Magdalena, where they had embarked for Barranquilla, a place held by the forces of Landáburu and Polanco.

The custom houses of Riohacha, Santmarta, and Sabanilla

were in the power of the revolutionists, and with the immense resources and the collected products of these harbors they were keeping alive the revolution and enriching its chiefs.

Landáburu was on a voyage to foreign parts, probably for the purpose of selling those cargoes that had been exported for his account, and also to buy vessels and munitions. Polanco was in Barranquilla, where he was taking steps to seize Cartagena and make that his headquarters, according to rumor.

Ronderos ordered Alejandro to march with the forces under his command to general headquarters, meeting him at Antioquia, where further steps would be decided upon. The most urgent and indispensable thing was to rush to the defense of Cartagena, to free the coast from guerrilla power, wrest the river from the hands of the revolutionists, and reestablish communications for the Government, both with the Atlantic littoral and the outside world.

Concluding the reading of this important missive, Roberto exclaimed:

"The most pressing matter, in my judgment, is to rescue the Count. With a detachment that you will not refuse me, with Casanova's battalion and Chispas' lancers, I will undertake to hand Socarraz over to you within a fortnight."

"I am unable to do so," replied Alejandro in a voice full of sadness, one which betrayed his disappointment and bitterness. "I cannot do so. The orders leave me no choice but to obey. Disobedience would be treason. . . . Come, my poor boy, come and help me arrange for the march to Antioquia for to-morrow. . . . What bad luck!"

Roberto crossed the camp, and in order to obtain some hours of sleep strung his hammock between two trees, close to the border of the river. He stretched himself out in it, refreshed by a cooling breeze, lulled by the motion of the river which came plashing against the bank. But he found it impossible to sleep. The image of his friend, prisoner of such a brute as Socarraz, badly treated, ageing before his time, dead perhaps from hunger and thirst, without doubt ill as well, dragged by the ferocious guerrilla chief through the pampas during inclement weather, forced to accompany him in all his lawless and dangerous undertakings, which he was bound to attempt during his continuous flight before the power of the government, filled Roberto

with dark forebodings and anxiety, and in his brain were crowding the most desperate projects to free his friend. At last, however, worn out by fatigue and lack of sleep, he felt that drowsiness was gradually gaining on him, and in his lethargy the images of Dolores and of Inés, the face of his mother, pale and enfeebled, with tears in her anxious eyes, became blurred, and he sank into profound slumber.

Suddenly he awoke with a start. He thought he had heard a shot. He tried to collect himself and listened attentively. No sound was heard. He must have been dreaming. The breeze carried to him bits of fine ashes, probably from some camp or bonfires but half extinguished. And he could hear the shouts of the sentinels who passed along the watchword — the steps of the patrols who passed quietly through the camp, and the trot of the horse carrying the officer of the day.

Another shot. . . . Yes, there was no doubt. He had not deceived himself.

It must be an attack.

Roberto flew to the tent of Alejandro, whom he found grasping his revolver and quickly girding on his sword.

Chispas, officer of the day, came up on horseback.

“General, an attack. They have dispersed the advance guard.”

The noise was increasing every instant, like a torrent, as in a storm rolling thunderclaps become more and more distinct, more and more formidable. Perucho, the trumpeter, at the orders of Alejandro, gives a blast. The soldiers, dazed and still half asleep, get on their feet, run to where their rifles are stacked, but before they have formed their ranks, there appears a black mass at a hundred steps from them, a cyclone of horses which comes on thundering right into the very center of the camp, breaking small groups that are just forming to right and left, cutting down some who in a panic are taking to the river, while others, who are recovering from their fright, are lowering their bayonets, or else take random shots.

Socarraz, at the head of his numerous cavalry, is advancing with lightning speed towards the infantry, and the latter, surprised, paralyzed by the unexpected, has not yet succeeded in drawing itself up, so that the audacious guerrilla troops on their swift animals are rapidly approaching, and doing so are throw-

ing burning bunches of straw at different points where easily inflammable material is stored.

Alejandro and Roberto are calling for the trumpeter Perucho. But he has vanished. In despair they rush to the camp, reestablish a sort of order, encouraging the soldiers, drawing up the battalions, massing the cavalry in pursuit of the fugitives. The squadrons of Chispas are now in pursuit of Socarraz's riders.

"What a disgrace!" bellows Chispas himself, while he digs his spurs into the haunches of his beast, "for the Scorpion to surprise us. But look out! We shall take him from the side."

Day began to break, and with the approach of dawn a strong wind set in which scattered the isolated flames over the adjoining plain with its withered and parched vegetation. At various points of the camp, marking the track of Socarraz's cavalry, sinister pillars of smoke were rising . . . the sparks flew between the straw stacks, and here and there darted red tongues of flame with a sinister gleaming.

Suddenly, on the summit of a hill, the outlines of a horseman appeared. Face, body, horse, lance, all stood out sharply from the luminous background, the whole silhouette being intensely black.

"It is he!" exclaimed Chispas full of anger.

"Escorpión! Escorpión!" shouted his lancers and attacked the hillside with great valor.

Behind Socarraz there now appeared a number of other horsemen on top of the hill, and then it was an entire squadron that suddenly stood out against the ruddy horizon in apparently interminable file, like black ghosts on the rosy skyline.

Chispas's horsemen started in a frenzy of bravery up the steep ascent of the hill, and dextrously began to climb it. The horses, full of pluck, required scarcely any spurring.

But Socarraz's lancers awaited them up on the summit, in vastly superior positions. When the squadrons of Chispas were still at a hundred paces, the line of black ghosts suddenly began to become alive. Their little flags on the long shafts of their lances fluttered in the brisk wind, and sharply defined themselves against the ruddy gleam of the air. Then they lowered their weapons and with savage shouts rushed to the attack against their enemies. Midway of the rising ground there was a terrific collision. The clash of steel upon steel, shouts, neigh-

ing and squealing horses, rushing away without their riders, falling bodies, rude blows; the slashing of sabers and machetes, red flashes of lances that are lowered and bury themselves in the flesh, the vitals of opponents, then are raised again, are cloven in two, clatter to the ground; dull, half-suppressed noises, cries, curses, bodies against bodies, wrestling for a deadly grapple; the fiery sheen reflects the steel of lance points, reddened now with the blood of the enemy, as are the banderoles, the sabers. And then,—chaos . . . a nondescript mass of struggling, howling, groaning, shrieking creatures, right in the midst of powder, smoke and blood.

A dense, grayish gas, mostly smoke, wraps the whole scene and its actors. Meanwhile the conflagration which enabled Socarraz to penetrate to the very center of the camp, spreads with awful speed in the whole surrounding plain, fanned on by the strong gale now blowing, rises on the hillsides, surrounds them and reaches out farther, while the size and fierceness of the flames keep growing. They no longer lap at objects; they open wide their hungry maws, and instantly devour. Thicker and thicker the smoke is getting, it seizes and asphyxiates its victims. The fine, flying ashes blind people. The burning fragments are carried through the air and spread the fire along great distances. And still the slaughter up on the hill is going on uninterruptedly. In dust, and flames and heat men are hacking away at each other. Horses that are being scorched by the flames rise on their hind legs, bellowing with torture. The lances again and again burrow into the flesh and come back dripping with blood, are withdrawn from bowels and bellies and brains they have pierced. Riders are tottering in their saddles and fall to rise no more. On the soil also there is fire, and corpses are being devoured by it. The odor of burning flesh is sickening. But the horses at last refuse to obey their riders, turn and do not come back to the slaughter, in spite of all spurring.

In the camp, too, the fire spread with giddy swiftness. It ran on, flattening out through the parched prairie lands about, blanketed in a whitish smoke, slightly tinged with yellow, dense and biting, and soon after there were heard thousands of slight cracklings; lastly the flames themselves which, as though inspired by the prevailing rage for destruction, voracious, domi-

nant, wasteful, sprang about with amazing leaps, walked in whirlpools of fire, ever advancing, though often springing back for a minute on their back path, with capricious motions, but in an instant appearing again in front, as advance guards of ruin and destruction. And the empire of the raging fire widened every instant.

Surprised in their hiding-places by the sudden inundation of fire, masses of strange insects, wild beasts, poisonous reptiles, ran about on the open prairie in all directions, crazed and paralyzed by the fury of this unknown element, escaping perhaps on one side, and engulfed by it on the other. Many of these creatures in their blind fear ran and ran until they rushed direct into the hungry mouth of the fiery fiend.

The entire contingent of troops has been forced to surrender the camp to the power of the flames, which pursued them at every step. But suddenly there is an outcry, a shouting by the multitude:

“The hospital!”

Some women with hair flying, clad in all sorts of rags, and pressing their babies to their bosoms, with pitiable voices beg help for those unfortunate beings who are on the point of perishing in the flames to whose rage they have been abandoned.

Doctor Miranda hastens at once to their rescue, heading a squad of soldiers who, by prodigious leaps, evading the danger, arrive in front of the cluster of lightly constructed buildings. A thousand tongues of fire are already licking at them. In an instant they have run along the whole outlines, have spread over the roof, and in a twinkling the whole roof bursts into flames.

A number of the sick patients have appeared, have fallen down in the doorway, thus blocking the only entrance, stretch out their blackened hands, and with throats paralyzed with fear and heat, utter hoarse death rattles. Beyond the reddish curtain of flames may be indistinctly seen the great crowd of sick and wounded, writhing in the fiery furnace, enlarging the great heap of those blocking up the entrance, their heads shorn of hair by the fire, the faces as black as charcoal.

Doctor Miranda, resolved to sacrifice himself, rushed to the front, intent upon penetrating to the interior. But a hurricane of roaring flames kept him back. In the space inside there

sounded a clamor of despair which mingled with the bellowing of the conflagration.

The flames, having now encompassed the whole structure, rose in a straight line. They gained constantly in volume, pushing each other, rising and broadening, parting and uniting, and sending even arrows of fire up to the tops of the palm trees. One could hear the fan-shaped fronds of the trees shriveling and roasting, then suddenly be devoured by the element, and all the foliage on the trees vanishing in the fiery breath, then the buildings in full flame, the straw roofs transformed to gleaming ashes, and next the woodwork on the roofs, the walls, all forming one huge flame, crackling in one series of explosions.

The roof now crumbled. The clamor of voices inside the vast space ceased suddenly, and the timbers, after bending, sank into the depths, into one fearful crater that kept on sending up showers of sparks. . . .

Doctor Miranda still wished to try the impossible. But he was forcibly torn away from the scene. Before he yielded, however, he raised his streaming eyes to heaven, lifted his hands, let them drop slowly, with a gesture that bespoke both leniency and pardon, and exclaimed in a voice that was shaken by sobs:

“Children of Jesus Christ, redeemed by his most holy blood, who are in the death throes devoured by flames under atrocious sufferings. I grant you absolution in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### ALLIGATORS AND VULTURES

ALEJANDRO and General Borrero were busy emplacing a number of cannons. Since the evening previous they had been in Puerta Borja, which Landáburo had abandoned on the approach of Alejandro's forces. General Ronderos had followed with the main strength of his army—eight thousand men,—marching by way of the great plain of Ayapel, and had en-



trusted to Roberto the task of going with smaller forces in advance of the army to advise those in defense of Cartagena that a numerous army would soon arrive to their aid. Roberto to take the route of Panama, if that should be practicable. Alejandro had been charged with the work of proceeding through the dense forests, reaching the river, fortifying Puerta Borja, and obstructing the passage of the steamers which Landáburo had armed for war purposes.

"Just see, General," said Alejandro, "how Nature day by day wins back her domain. A few months ago there was here a swarming ant-heap of human beings. Five thousand colonists were at work in all directions. The dredges toiled at all hours. The engines were whistling in the woods quite cheerfully, and the vessels entering or leaving the harbor imparted plenty of life and motion. It meant the conquest of man over the forest, over barbarism. Now on the contrary, the wild forest takes revenge, is even at this short time again surrounding these buildings. It stretches its arms, its twining plants out, and is invading the shops, the storage houses, the magazines. The alligators are once more asleep on the shores without being driven to flight by the incessant coming and going of the steamers. Frightened away by us, they are returned to enjoy again in these surroundings the quiet of those epochs when man and his plans were both absent from their quarters. Just like the forest, they wished to reconquer their own domain. Only look, General, at that big family of them over yonder, at the other shore, lazy, well fed with all those dead bodies that have floated down the river after so many fights of late."

"Please allow me," interrupted Borrero, "I want to try a shot at them with this Hotchkiss gun. . . . I want to find out whether it has the required reach and power."

He fired the shot. The forest echoed and reechoed. On the broad beach across, the bomb burst, and a palm-shaped pillar of water spouted up. Several alligators plunged swiftly into the near water, raising their tails. Others, wounded or dying, were wallowing in the mire close by, while still others remained immovable.

"General, do you want to join me in a reconnaissance?"

"Let us go," returned Alejandro.

They crossed the wide square, leaving on one side and the

other the few buildings that Landáburo had not destroyed, and then they made their way to the small hill which fronted the river.

"From this height," observed Borrero, whose thoughts always turned on military operations, "Landáburo could have kept us away with the guns he had. But fortunately he fled as soon as he received news of our approach."

"That is his habit," observed Alejandro drily.

"He has also shipped off, in the vessels of which he could dispose, as much of the immense provisions stored up here by the Canalization company as he found it possible to do."

"And that again is in conformity with his habits. Quite a humanitarian and progressist program he has: not to fight, not to spill fraternal blood, but instead to load his knapsack up with exportable fruit."

As they roamed about the territory so lately made use of by the Canalization enterprise, they met everywhere with damaged steel rails, whole engines or pieces of machinery rendered useless, wheels, pumps, boilers, locomotives, and a big amount of other material needed for the enterprise, wasted, spoiled.

"All this useless destruction, so barbarous, wicked, and carried out by the alleged apostles of progress, is what pains me most," interjected Alejandro in a melancholy voice.

"Millions lost," said Borrero.

"No, it is not that. It is because to my mind it seems that I have lived with all those ruined machines, those locomotives and engines now only fit for the scrap heap, with those dredges and boilers, in intimate contact for months and months, then so full of life and useful activity, now silent and useless, and they seem to me to have been friends and comrades, now wounded or dead. Their labor, their voice, their motion was like something of my own self, poured into iron and steel. They were my own will power and my own energy distributed in torrents in this camp, which gradually was losing its savage character, domesticating itself, being transformed into a wealthy and happy city. To my fancy something of me has died with the death of all this."

While Alejandro, weeks before, had gone on his way towards the Magdalena and Roberto was crossing the Cauca district, General Ronderos, on the way towards the Atlantic Coast, had

crossed the Cordillera and descended to the wide plains of Bolívar. The rainy season had come, and a rough, persistent winter caused the army much trouble. Often they were compelled to wade through deep morasses, and at other times they had to walk through lagoons and lakes with the water reaching up to their waists. Many of these stagnant pools covered a great area. The mire removed from such springs or lagoons emitted pestilential and poisonous miasmas.

Torrential and incessant downpours, like a deluge, accompanied them entire days and even weeks. And the army went on with a low horizon that enclosed them on every side, slipping along muddy stretches, paddling in the water, making their painful way through the mire and ooze. Always under a gray and veiled sky, a sky hung thick with compact, murky clouds. Sometimes the morning would open with clear weather. Then the sun would scorch the shoulders like flaming arrows, and the soldiers would be almost suffocated by hot vapors. But then the horizon would again be crowded with dark clouds, the atmosphere become thicker and thicker, the thunder begin to roll, and the tempest burst out amidst flashes of lightning.

The mules heavily laden with guns and ammunition would sink up to their backs in the semi-liquid ground, and many perished in the morass. The soldiers saw themselves obliged under such circumstances to unload the beasts of burden times innumerable, and to carry their bulky burdens up to dry places, a work which, repeated again and again, unduly fatigued these men who had been losing their strength by previous hardships of all kinds. During this long and painful march whole brigades perished, the army lost its entire cavalry, and Chispas became adjutant of the commanding general.

During these interminable marches, as during the sleepless nights, the army was followed, pursued and always enveloped in a cloud of mosquitoes, microscopically tiny insects, but more dangerous than the tigers and lions of those waste lands, because they brought with them from the swamps, their breeding places, the germs of the fever that was decimating the army.

“Tell Colonel Milan Gil that I want to see him!”

Ronderos during the march went quite in the rear, depressed, thoughtful. He carried in his soul all these fatigues and hardships of his soldiers. Gay and impenetrable before his subalterns, he hid in the depths of his heart his bitter reflections, only to open his heart in the intimate colloquies he had with his God, whom he asked for an opportunity to die a death worthy of a soldier. He wished to disappear, to be annihilated. His beard white as snow and much longer than of yore, his hair long, both floated around his neck like a stigma of old age. His thought, always taken up with the unforeseen, keen to scent danger, was agitated in the midst of this wilderness and these tempests and tropical rains, between the sinister yesterday and the disastrous to-morrow. He considered death a happy solution, leaving to it the weight of responsibility and the uncertainties of the future.

When Chispas came, Ronderos turned on him his eyes that were fatigued by broken nights, and which burned somberly below a cadaverous forehead from out of deepened sockets.

"Colonel Chispas, do you know how many losses we have had during the last few weeks?"

And with a quiet voice, approaching him, he said:

"Two thousand, yes, two thousand losses. I must make them up with the Grenadiers, a battalion under the command of Alejandro in Puerto Borja. They are only a thousand men, it is true, but they are worth ten thousand to us. Within a month I reckon on being before the walls of Cartagena to set the place free. You will understand me. It is a delicate mission, of decisive importance for the success of the campaign. You know, of course, that the road is menaced by the guerilla forces who are making constant efforts to intercept my communications with the Government. I have chosen you for this mission because, besides being brave, you are made for the rough life of the soldier, and I believe you capable of confronting all the obstacles and hardships that impede success. Alejandro will believe your words without any written lines. Have you understood me well?"

"Yes, General, perfectly. When am I to start?"

"At once."

Milan got his horse and made ready to leave. With most profound pain Ronderos saw this friend taking his farewell,—

a friend so loyal and so amiable, and he perhaps envied him his death; he felt he would not see him again. . . .

“Milan! Milan!”

And when he joined him:

“When you return, if you return, whatever you wish is yours. And now let me hug you.”

Once more now Chispas crossed the savannah, going from north to south, the same route he had just come with the army, and then he made his way into the Cordillera, until he had attained the height of the pass which leads to the Magdalena. Then he turned towards the east, through the only practicable path that he could use. However, after traversing but a short part of it, he perceived the camp of a body of guerrillas who were stationed there for the precise purpose of intercepting communications between Alejandro and Ronderos. He left, therefore, his horse behind him, and made his way through the mountains on foot, stumbling now and then upon huts of the hospital service, where he obtained directions regarding the right road to follow.

He traveled with great swiftness during the morning. The pleasant weather, the fresh breeze from the mountain, and the shade of the trees, allowed him to make the descent from the summit of the range without fatigue and shortly after the noon hour he had arrived at the hot valley through which the Magdalena runs.

Here he calculated that the river could be but a few miles distant, and that, therefore, he should be able to cross before nightfall the plain covered by woods which separated it from the camp of Alejandro.

It was virgin forest that covered this plain, never trodden by human foot, enriched by centuries of alluvial deposits, vivified by the warm sod and showing a wealth of gigantic trees which here, in the moist warmth of winter, had attained a great height in the silence of their impenetrability.

Coming under the shade of this foliage, Chispas received at once an impression of coolness which contrasted with the almost insupportable heat outside. Suddenly he saw his horizon limited by rows upon rows of trees. The ground was covered by a thick carpet of dried leaves; here and there were pools overgrown with aquatic plants, and he perceived an

odor that was sweetish and repugnant, an odor of immense vegetable decay, the miasma of fever.

At this hour Nature, as though prostrated by the heat, seemed asleep,—dead. There reigned a solemn and terrifying silence, as in the ruins of a cathedral.

For an instant this wilderness filled his mind with anxiety. It seemed to him that it weighed on him with a formidable, paralyzing burden. But he shook off these sinister reflexions entirely, and went forward, full of energy, bold and resolute.

Chispas went on with difficulty, because his feet sank deeply into the layers of dry leaves, and he had to leap constantly from spot to spot to avoid the miry or swampy places; or else he was kept back by deep holes and gullies filled with rain water or decayed vegetation, by ditches, by fallen tree trunks, by springs of water or by twining plants and climbing vines that entangled his limbs and which he often had to cut loose with his machete. A cloud of wasps, buzzing around him, followed him, harassed and stung him, covering him with blisters and sores on hands and face.

But nevertheless, he went along with vigor and full of hope. He was stimulated by the wish to welcome his friends in Alejandro's camp, and he already could see himself returning with them, at the head of the Grenadiers, pressing the hand of the General, who with gracious words would thank him for the great service rendered the army. He recalled the general's promise: "If you return you may have anything you wish!" After so many sacrifices, he would ask for his discharge. He would return to his little house at La Laguna. He saw Damiana, with a baby in her arms, come out to welcome him with smiles and sobs.

Early in the afternoon, when the sun began its home journey, Nature, waking from her lethargy, began to give evidence of life. From the soil, from the pools, from the waste spots, from the curtains of greenery, from the highest foliage, there came surging down, little by little, screams, shrieks, roars, bellows, grunts, chirpings, murmurings,—the whole fervor, the palpitation of a primitive and potent Nature.

He came to a palm grove. The pointed shoots lifted themselves up skywards like sharp needles, and unfolded their fan-like leafage in a refulgent plenitude of light. The dry

leaves fell all about the trunks in great number, while the wind, caressing the green plumes, produced in them a strange shiver, as of live beings.

He still rushed on with anxiety, because he noticed that the sun, which easily stole in between the open spaces of the palm trees, began to take on orange-hued tones that covered the whole trunks, from top to root, with a golden burnish. And the shadows he threw when he came to open spaces, was becoming longer and longer.

Should he have to continue his journey by night time, through this mysterious forest, exposed to all the perils of the unknown, perhaps to attacks by wild beasts, to snake bites?

Filling him with affright there came to his ears, repeated a thousandfold, cries almost articulate, and about which it was impossible to say whether they were sorrowful human complaints or the roars of savage beasts. A little later there could be noticed, high up on the top of the highest branches, a whole crowd of monkeys, flinging themselves from branch to branch, from trunk to trunk, holding on with their coiled tails, swinging slowly between one tree and the next, stretching out their long hairy arms, until they could grasp the lower branches strong enough to bear their weight. When they perceived Chispas, they stopped long enough to examine him carefully, watched him with surprise, sat down meanwhile or hid among the dense foilage, uttering shrill grunting sounds, and making grotesque grimaces.

Flocks of birds seeking their nests were picking at leaves and filling the trees with noisy chirpings.

Night closed in. The wind shook with greater force the overhanging cupola of foliage. Those noises which during the afternoon hours had peopled the immense solitude now changed in kind. They became strange and melancholy. There was a strenuous fervor, an infinite variety of sounds everywhere, whistling sounds, acute and as though they were watchwords and signals to be on the alert, predominating, mingling with monotonous tunes, croakings, cacklings, owl hootings, quacking of aquatic birds, roars of savage beasts.

In the obscurity there were flying all about, scattering thin flashes or patches of greenish light, myriads of fire flies and glow worms. Along the trunks of powerful trees, as upon

graves in a cemetery, were lit and extinguished with equal rapidity, fugitive phosphorescent gleams.

Little by little, despite his fearlessness, Chispas felt fear creep into his soul. He attempted to hasten his steps, but at each turn he tottered and fell. Then the damp, dead foliage, clinging to his feet and legs, began to feel like the creeping skin of reptiles. The fire flies seemed to be the fierce gleaming of tigers' eyes; the twining plants became hands that attempted to strangle him, and behind the trees he thought he saw phantoms in ambush ready to assail him.

After hours and hours of marching, his strength began to give out, and his body demanded some rest. But, with supreme resolution, his feet sore and his hands bleeding, he still went on. Every moment or so the sky became visible through the curtain of foliage overhead, and he then saw the stars shining. He made an attempt to get his bearings, and to fix his whereabouts at the time. When he did so, he became aware that he was again in the palm grove he had left hours before.

With anger, with despair, with intense disappointment, he then felt that after his great efforts, and after such crushing fatigue, he had been moving about all the time without advancing a single step. He had lost his way. Discouragement seized him. Why should he struggle any longer? Better abandon himself to his unhappy fate,—let death overtake him. . . . But no, rest, sleep would bring back his strength. Why should he tire himself continuing his painful march during the night? To what end was he to spend his forces uselessly? When day came, he could easily ascertain his location, reach the border of the river and then follow a fixed and safe direction.

He calmed down and became again master of himself. And he stretched himself out on the ground, at the foot of a palm tree, and in spite of the hunger he felt he soon fell fast asleep.

It was, however, an inquiet sleep, tormented by horrifying visions. It seemed to him that cold reptiles were crawling all over his body; that a big snake had encircled his throat and was choking him; that a savage beast was devouring his bowels. Each one of these terrible dreams meant for him a horrible pain or an awful foreboding. Suddenly he awoke. He had



felt an ardent breath, a fiery vapor upon his face. He quickly collected his senses and in the uncertain light of the stars and of the glow worms he was able to make out a tiger which, surprised, made a leap backwards, gave a tremendous roar, and then ran to safety in the surrounding thicket.

Seized with terror, and maddened, Chispas broke out in a run, a run without aim, without object, simply a run to flee, to escape this accursed and evil forest. Although exhausted, he felt once more an extraordinary amount of vigor. His muscles took on the elasticity and resilient power of steel. He swept aside the twining plants that were hindering him in his flight; he used his hands in tearing at thorns and brushwork, though it brought him more scratches and wounds; with tireless energy he bounded over great water-filled holes and tree trunks; lying prone, he knocked his head against trees and slid through narrow spaces like a reptile; he got up, fell again, and got on his feet again in order to continue his wild run. Nothing could stop or hinder him. Nothing in the shape of an obstacle was able to keep him back from his insane course.

When day began to dawn dimly, the moon rose. It filled the forest with new terrors and mysteries. The moonlight diffused a half shadow in which a pale clearness of ghostly white trembled, veiling objects,— which painted spots of strange luminousness upon tree trunks, leaving the remainder in inky blackness. It lit up in patches the stagnant pools, and was reflected by them in lugubrious tints. It designed in the thick air angular, grotesque or tragical figures. It seemed to share with the forest its own spirit and life, a life made up of melancholy and sadness.

The presence of this vague light, and more still his anxieties and forebodings, awoke in him afresh the sense of reality and restored his reason. He halted in his mad run. In spite of his feverish excitement, his body felt cold as ice. He felt himself all over. He was soaking wet. He concluded that he must have fallen into the water, without becoming conscious of it. The bites of insects hurt him greatly. His long abstinence from food, aggravated by violent exercise, gave him cramps, a deadly pain, an approaching annihilation of his whole being. His throat felt like live coal. Now that he had again calmed down, he looked for water to quench his in-

tense thirst. When he found it, he drank some mouthfuls with avidity, then fell down on the ground with mouth open.

The moon disappeared and the shadows reigned alone again. His terrible visions returned, the reptiles, the savage beasts. Sleep which delivered him up defenseless to the poison of the serpents, to the teeth of the tiger, inspired him, therefore, with greater terror even than did the dangers that had just been torturing him. Sleep he now looked upon as his very worst foe. So that now there arose a bitter struggle between his exhausted body and the sleep he needed so badly. Sleep seemed to him, in fact, an invincible monster that crept constantly nearer, fascinating and tempting him, drawing him on, closing his eyelids, paralyzing his limbs, robbing him of his will power, and laying him out flat and powerless on the ground. To resist sleep, therefore, he made superhuman efforts, summoning the last remnant of his energy. He moved constantly from one side to another, he wounded himself purposely, he got up, he knocked his head against the tree trunks, he rubbed the sores made by insect bites until they bled anew, and in the midst of darkness he continued these struggles for hours.

At last that night of interminable minutes drew to a close. Light came. The forest intoned its morning hymn. A thrill of hope, a vibration of rejoicing, a symphony of chirpings, of trills and merry songs enwrapped the unfortunate man, penetrated him, lent him new support and relief, pushed him onward on his road.

From the bottom of his soul Chispas, kneeling humbly, addressed a short but fervent prayer to God, lifted up his spirit and implored to be led out of this cruel, murderous wilderness, and then, filled with a new faith, he resumed his way.

After a short march, however, he felt that his body in no way answered to the virility of his spirit, and that, having already given all of his strength, he was worn out, prostrated, spent. He discovered that there was nothing in his vigorous will power for his enfeebled body to lean on, and this conviction fixing itself in his mind, he began to walk with extreme slowness. He was tottering like a drunken man, supporting himself against the trees, grasping with uncertain hands branches and twigs. He felt in his legs a strange weight, some-

thing which did not come from his own body, that seemed like two big lumps of iron that he was forced to tear out of an uneven soil. And between the two temples there was apparently driven a red-hot nail, while throughout the entire frame an itching, darting pain was shooting to and fro ceaselessly, comparable to thousands of needles pricking flesh and nerves.

Through his brain, burning with fever, there were crossing terrifying visions. He was dreaming in plain daylight. Changing rapidly, there passed before his eyes scenes either horrible or overpoweringly sweet. Sometimes the images were of death, again of the happy past, of his wedding in the chapel at Sauzal, of the caresses of his wife, of the newly-born baby that held out its arms to him. . . .

He fell on the ground. He tried to shout, to ask for help. But only an imperceptible sob would rise to his throat, a harsh and raucous rattle. He was overcome, exhausted, dying; only his overexcited fancy was active, moving with lightning-like swiftness.

He felt the approach of death, the definitive, irrevocable sentence. He saw himself stretched out on his own bier, lying there with open eyes, while the crows were making a meal of him, or while wild creatures devoured him. And what then would become of his family? Then he saw Damiana, holding the little child by the hand, begging alms from door to door. Both were in rags. The baby was crying, but people drove them away with scorn. Sobs began to convulse him, sobs that shook his breast; but they were mute sobs, for his throat was unable to produce sounds. Tears were rolling down his burning cheeks.

Then he saw a livid, ghastly face, which looked at him with squinting eyes. Socarraz! . . . He struck Damiana, lashed the child with a whip, while the tiny creature begged him weepingly to desist. . . . No, he did not strike Damiana, this image, but he caressed her and dragged her into his arms, . . . and she? . . . She smiled upon him with her mouth so rosy and fresh,—showing those two rows of magnificent teeth that lent so much expression to her smile.

No, he did not wish to die. He supported himself upon his two trembling hands. Half reassured, he raised his eyes to

God and in a prayer of supreme devotion he pleaded that his own life might be spared him, and that his wife and young child be given protection, those two who were pieces of his very heart, who without him would die of misery and loneliness . . . or that the other one, that Socarraz might be snatched away.

And he began anew to move his limbs, to crawl forwards, spending whole hours in advancing a short distance.

In the trees he heard noisy flutterings, sinister croakings, and he saw a flock of vultures that extended their sharp bills above the foliage and followed him. It was an omen of death itself. But a sudden resignation, a supreme consolation came down from heaven to him, and fortified his oppressed spirit. Death, after all, meant liberty, meant the end of his troubles and pains, meant union with God, the beginning of a better life. He would struggle no more. He would gladly await his dissolution. . . . And he remained thus a long while, quite at ease, commending his soul to the Creator, and entrusting the beings he loved to his care, making profession of contrition, of supreme love and devotion.

Suddenly he heard the whistle of a steamer. Was that the delirium of fever? No, the whistling was now repeated, came nearer, clear and precise. Then he also heard trumpet blasts, like a prelude to salvation, like a greeting from life itself.

“Ah, . . . the camp!”

The noise made by the wheel of a steamer, the waves which struck against the embankment, and the threshing sound made by the engines of the vessel coming nearer and nearer, were heard in front, and then grew faint and fainter in the distance. Hope, cheerfulness, the ardor and the desire to live put into his enfeebled body a last spark of energy, a strength, a force unhopd for.

He crawled to the bank of the river, and then fell down on the shore. A sleep that was the outgrowth of fever and complete exhaustion seized him, dominated him, clamped him down to the spot, robbed him of all power of motion.

The flock of vultures came down, and began to examine him, stretching out their bare necks, making singular leaps, half opening their wings. There began to appear at the border of the river the enormous head of an alligator, with its jaws open.

It sunk its claws into the bank, drew its back out of the water, and set out on its way across the sand with waddling steps.

The vultures, seeing this rival about to rob them of their prey, became alarmed and uttered a series of croaks, directing their iron bills against their foe.

The alligator with a deep bite seizes Chispas by one of his legs and drags his body behind him by a series of tugs.

The vultures crowd together, croaking furiously, whirl about and perform a grotesque dance.

In the shallower water of the river border are appearing other alligators.

Suddenly the body of the unfortunate Chispas, the alligator that has seized him, and those other alligators that are waiting and are going to dispute possession with him at the bottom of the river, all disappear together below the surface of the water, so silently, so smoothly that not even the grass and weeds growing along the shore are disturbed by it all.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

AFTER passing through a large part of the country and making brief halts at the towns of Cartago, Buga and Cali, Roberto had arrived at Buenaventura, accompanied by Casanova. He was discharging the commission which General Ronderos had entrusted him with,—that of bringing news of the approach of the army of those small forces defending Cartagena against the Revolutionists.

From the nature of the road he knew that he would find it very difficult to get to Panama, because if during normal times there came to Buenaventura only an average of two vessels per week, now, because of the Revolution, it was but very rarely that any vessel at all touched at that small harbor. The little town, previously showing only slight indication of prosperity, was now suffering from the consequences of the war. Its streets were deserted, its harbor lifeless, its warehouses and shops empty and locked up, and it bore all the

signs of a total paralyzation of trade and shipping, of general poverty and complete stagnation.

Roberto was consumed with impatience in view of the impossibility of continuing his journey, and in his anxiety he passed hours and hours of his time at the seashore, staring at the bay where the lazy waters came slowly up to his seat until the wavelets would lap his feet and then again retreat, leaving bare an extensive shore littered with all sorts of filth and rubbish, and which, heated by the tropical sun, rendered the air unwholesome and infected with the germs of serious diseases.

On a certain morning, after one of those squalls frequent along the coast of the Pacific, he sallied forth as usual to scan the horizon, and soon he saw in the offing, where he had so often gazed in vain, a small black cloud, no larger than a speck, which stood out from the diaphanous crystal of the sky. A vessel? Little by little the dark spot began to define itself, gaining substance, and after he had waited anxiously some time longer, there became visible two points above the level of the sea, two smokestacks crowned by black plumes. Soon the hull of the ship could be seen, then the main mast, the rigging, and at last the flag and the two white ridges raised by the keel as it cleft the waters of the bay with its steel edge.

Quite absorbed by his observations Roberto noticed how the vessel, after describing an elegant curve, stopped, and next he heard the creaking of the chains being paid out, the clatter of iron upon iron, and the drop of the anchor as it sank into the depths of the bay.

She was a German merchant vessel, with an uncertain destination, to return home after the lapse of six months. She was to make a stop at Panama, but not to carry passengers. Nevertheless, Roberto entered into amicable relations with the captain commanding the ship, and obtained the favor of him (after winning his good will, and by dint of much persuasive eloquence), of being taken on board for a passage to Panama.

While they were still in the bay of Panama it became known on board, through the harbor officials, that the city was in the hands of the revolutionists and that it was commanded by General Pericles Azucararse (alias the mulatto, José Dolores).

This presented a new and possibly insuperable obstacle. Roberto could not disembark without falling a prisoner into

the hands of the guerilla chief. The captain of the vessel came once more to his aid, saving him from his predicament. Indeed, he wrote to the local authorities to the effect that he needed to send a subaltern of his to Colón in connection with some matters concerning the requirements of the ship. Thus Roberto was able to leave the ship in the disguise of an officer of the merchant marine, contriving to slip past the harbor master unnoticed and cutting short with a curt and brief "hum, yes," all dangerous conversation regarding his incognito.

The Government forces, defeated in Panama, had fortified themselves in Colón, so that the legitimate government was still in power in the latter city. There Roberto, in contrast with the past obstacles and disappointments, had a pleasant surprise. He found that the cruiser *Alcón*, purchased from Gacharnah by the war secretary in Bogotá, had arrived in Colón the night before. The commissioner who had brought the vessel did not know exactly to whom to deliver her. Roberto, who easily procured all the authorization required for the case from the Government, readily took over command of the vessel as a Colombian cruiser.

The crew was German, and was under the immediate orders of Captain Müller. The latter was a good-tempered jovial elderly man, a votary of Bacchus, of delicate, feminine features, and gifted with amiable courtesy.

The captain then placed himself at the disposal of Colonel Ávila, and they both proceeded to investigate the vessel from stem to stern. Roberto noticed with surprise the luxury which reigned everywhere in this vessel, now turned into a cruiser. There were mysterious nooks and cabins, a labyrinth of passages, a soft half-light everywhere, a perfumed atmosphere, thick curtains, rich carpets, downy divans, marble toilet tables, and he was struck above all by the peculiar kind of refinement overhanging all. His expert eyes could not fail to perceive the exquisite harmony of colors and lines everywhere visible.

They came to a vast cabin on the ceiling of which Roberto could not help admiring an allegorical panel representing Music. It was the work of a master. At the back of this remarkable room there stood a beautiful grand piano, made of the rarest woods, with rich incrustations, and on which, in gold letters and arabesques was traced the inscription: "The Flying

Dutchman." And Roberto instantly remembered that one of Wagner's operas was thus called.

"Is that the name of the piano?" Roberto asked the captain, who had followed him with unsteady feet.

"No, the name of the vessel itself; its former name, . . . when it still belonged to the King of Bavaria. . . ."

"His gunboat?"

"Not exactly . . ." responded the captain, and began at once with enthusiasm to narrate the history of his vessel, saying:

"Ah, if it were not for the memories evoked by it, the memories which it guards, the artistic ties which bind me to it . . . I should not care to be its captain now. . . . Have you heard of the friendship which united my sovereign to the great man who directed the construction of this vessel?"

"Vickers Sons & Maxim?"

"No," said Müller, with a smile of disdain. "Wagner in person. Louis of Bavaria desired to own a bark that would immortalize the opera of the maestro. In summertime, after the music festivals of Bayreuth, there were to be given concerts, musical cycles on the high sea. He would undertake pleasure trips with the whole troupe, from the prima donna to the brilliant corps of ballerinas. Wagner himself went to the shipyard, and there he communicated to the builders his unique conceptions, so that the vessel would possess acoustic conditions of the highest order. How many times have I accompanied my beloved sovereign, with his dear ballerinas whom I myself directed, to the azure skies of the Mediterranean, to the coast of ancient Hellas, to Cyprus, to Sicily, to the cradles of art. . . ."

"But the years pass, and everything ages. My King died. The merry days of youth were followed by days and years of monotony and boredom. The Government of my country finally decided to sell this boat, already much deteriorated and now without any definite object to serve. But this vessel will forever be connected in my recollection with the great name of the master. I myself have never had the heart to separate myself from this vessel, and thus I came to America to share its fate, whatever it may be."

Deeply moved, Müller then sat down, as though crushed by a great grief, before the piano, and played with extraordinary



feeling and skill one of the most expressive passages from Wagner's great opera.

Meanwhile Roberto, although wrapped in the strains of this intoxicating music, which vibrated in the cabin as within the hollow of a mellow violin, thought he could hear between the folds of the heavy hangings that were fastened to the carpet on the floor, and in the delicious dusk of the adjoining smaller cabins, feminine laughter, whispering, caressing noises. . . .

But urged on by his keen wish to meet and encourage the defenders of Cartagena, Roberto hastened his departure, which was set for that very night.

It was necessary to find a port or a beach near the city whose fate was in doubt, because when sailing for it the vessel would be liable to attack by the enemy. Casanova and some others worthy of confidence succeeded in putting Roberto in contact both with Cartagena and with the chief commanding the army that was to liberate that town. In this certainly Captain Müller who knew very little about America and still less about the deserted coasts of Colombia, could be of very little help. But with the aid of a good chart and acting on information obtained in Colón, Roberto became convinced that the requirements would be met by San Pedro del Sinu, a small place to the east of Cartagena, frequented almost entirely by fishing boats and smugglers.

Greatly gratified by the success of this part of his task, Roberto started on his voyage, favored by magnificent weather. But he became soon aware, both by the slow progress made and by the irregular action of the engines, that the vessel was suffering from some grave defect. When he questioned the engineer, he learned that although from a strictly artistic point of view the *Flying Dutchman* was a model ship, it was somewhat different with its engines, since these had never been much to brag of in the beginning, and were now sadly suffering from age and long usage.

"But that is not a matter to worry about," opined Captain Müller, "at least not for such a consummate artist as with pleasure I see you are. The vessel, of course, has somewhat been affected by the rigors of time, just as I myself have. But there is a way to mend that. Just as soon as you have fulfilled your mission, we can go to Curaçao to have the necessary re-

pairs made. There we ourselves can renew our liquid provisions, almost exhausted on board,— a fact which, as chief of this expedition, I ought to let you know.”

In spite, however, of its slow progress, two days later they sighted in the dark background of the coast the group of houses which they were looking for.

“ Just look,” said the captain, accosting Roberto on deck, “ at those three lines: the wide sweep of the horizon, the coast, and the sea. . . . Does it not suggest to you the subject of a great painting? ”

“ I should prefer to know,” said Roberto, “ how we shall be able to disembark our men within these masterly lines.”

“ Well, as to that, I should not undertake to conceive a definite plan,” replied the captain, with a very friendly smile, “ but here we can have a pilot, who might be able to solve the puzzle.”

They dropped anchor at some distance from shore, for fear of shallows along the coast. Roberto gave detailed instructions to Casanova and his companion, handing them also a letter for Ronderos in which he let the latter know that within a fortnight he would be in the Bay of Cartagena and that he should attack the besiegers, provided he could be advised of the presence of the army, so that hostilities could be opened simultaneously. He also communicated to Ronderos the news that he had aboard two hundred boxes of munitions, as well as an extensive stock of military equipments and uniforms. As to the preconcerted assault he would fire three cannon shots, which ought to be replied to by another three shots from Ronderos' artillery.

In one of the two boats on board which preserved their old inscription of the Flying Dutchman, the commissioners approached the coast line. But not being able to land in the small craft, because the strong waves would have damaged or smashed it against the wharf, they reached the shore by swimming.

After several days of troublesome, navigating, during which the defects of the vessel grew more serious, Roberto arrived at Curaçao. With how much pleasure did he leave the sea to which he was not habituated, and touch again solid and inhabited soil!

He straightway made for the Hotel of the Lion of Flanders, and stepping into the spacious dining-room he heard voices and saw two men whom he seemed to know, one in front of the other; they were giving their most particular attention to a succulent meal of many dishes. The one man was thin, of rapid movements and extravagant gestures, in which could easily be read self-sufficiency and pretension. The other was flabby and fleshy, with thick eye glasses: Landáburo and Sánchez Méndez.

Landáburo proudly displayed the military uniform in which he was arrayed, dolman and kepis, in which guise Roberto had lately seen his picture on the wrapper of packages of cigarettes beneath the motto: "General Landáburo, Provisional President of Colombia." Méndez was in an elegant summer suit. Both showed in their manner a restful and pleasant life.

While they were enjoying their truffles and mushrooms and washed them down with wines of ancient vintage, they wrote in pencil something of importance which caused them great pre-occupation. For that reason they did not espy Roberto, who sat down not far from them, in the shadow of a curtain, whence he could hear while he satisfied his appetite, all Landáburo was reading, as follows:

Project of a pact of peace, concluded in Curacao between the most excellent Señor Floro Landáburo, President of Colombia, supreme director of the war and commander of the armies at sea and on shore, and his Excellency Luis Sánchez Méndez, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of Colombia to His Apostolic Majesty.

We, being genuine representatives of those two great political communities who are now at armed strife with each other regarding control of Colombia, desirous to consecrate the principle that their rights are equal and that the supremacy of the one in the government does not imply the forcible negation of all political life to the other, and still less its extermination, and corresponding to the faithful pledge given by our historical mission and to the confidence put in us by our fellow-citizens, and, generally speaking, by all Latin-America, have concluded to conclude and do conclude, *ad referendum*, the peace convention contained in the following articles:

1.) At the end of thirty days a convention shall meet in which will be represented all parties, thus: "Of the ninety members who will comprise that august body, thirty will be of the Revaluation Party, thirty of the Integros, and thirty of the Ministerial Party."

Landáburo interrupted himself, put his pencil behind his ear, drank a glassful with a relish, and observed:

"Thus, my dear Doctor, we shall have two-thirds of the whole."

"Yes, that is very well," rejoined Sánchez, "please continue!"

2.) In order to insure the validity of the preceding clause, the Government will punish severely those ministerials who vote in the electoral conscriptions assigned to the other two parties.

As a material guaranty, the forces of the Revolution which are now organized, will remain under arms, and in possession of the territory which they to-day occupy, as will those of the Government.

"This point is essential," grunted Sánchez, casting a shrewd glance at the other.

3.) The Convention once organized, the individual at this time holding it will, of course, lose the office of President of the Republic, and instead the power will be exercised by two Consuls, namely, the Provisional President and the late President of the Senate.

Sánchez, who was carving a roast, suspended his labors for a minute, and smilingly questioned Landáburu by a glance full of affection which he shot above his eyeglasses, and the latter, to make his meaning perfectly plain, added in a satisfied way: "You and I."

4.) The Convention will declare forfeited the rights and concessions of the Company of the Panama Canal, and will send a Commission of three members to take possession of the property of the said company.

5.) The Convention will also declare by one act the invalidity of the paper currency, the only method by which all Colombians will lose rapidly and equably their paper money, the rich as well as the poor, and thus will start afresh on a new path.

"These last two articles will show to the country that the interests of a sect have not been able to postpone, much less to forget, those of the parties to the contract, which means the interests of our country."

Sánchez nodded his head.

6.) The present Peace Convention, by which the Party of Revaluation recovers its rights, is not an alms given to beggars, but an act of patriotism, by which this party is placed on the same footing with its adversaries, without any other pretension than to sit down, of its own right, at the national table.

Landáburo finished his reading with a solemn voice, letting his glance travel all around, as though there were present a numerous audience, and then he laid his pencil on the table with emphasis. A vigorous outburst of laughter rang out at that moment from the corner occupied by Roberto. Then the latter rose and, still laughing, went up to his two countrymen, saying:

“Most excellent gentlemen, this project of yours strikes me as a surprisingly complete and perfect measure. That is the most scientific solution of the whole war. Accept my congratulations! Such a peace in which the two belligerents remain armed, confronting each other, is enough to render anybody enthusiastic. Elections so pure and so freely conducted that its results are foreseen in advance, and in which the votes of the friends of government are to be severely handicapped; an honor and a depreciation so heroic that all those in the possession of paper currency must lose them rapidly and equitably, as you put it, in order by these means to enrich the Republic . . . all this is worthy of the rude virtues of antiquity. I am more than assured that the Señor Minister will convert into invalidated paper money the fat sum paid him in gold for this diplomatic mission, and that it will be the same with the letters of exchange and those exportable fruits which in Colombia have filled the knapsacks of the Provisional President here present in order to secure for himself a modest competency. Both are going to lose their paper money rapidly and equably. I admire, above all, the self-denial with which you two choose to step down, one from his throne-like seat in the Senate, the other from his elevated diplomatic post, merely to fill the modest place of consuls after the Roman pattern. We should also be thankful that while you two are settling and discussing the fate of the combatants, you are meeting not in the camps, gaining those honors that are to be won there, but at a great distance away from danger, seated before an opulent meal in the Lion of Flanders, awaiting the right moment to sit down at the national table.”

And he went out, on his way to the dock-yard.

Landáburo instantly guessed the purpose of Roberto's trip to Curaçao, and set out to prevent his leaving the island. Indeed, he denounced him to the Dutch authorities of the island,

claiming that the cruiser *Alcón* had shown the British flag on the high seas for military reasons. The charge was false, but Roberto did not succeed in disproving it and leaving Curaçao before the expiration of the fortnight appointed between him and General Ronderos to attack the besiegers of Cartagena by land and sea.

Roberto in the midst of anxieties, could see in his mind's eye the old General, perhaps dying or totally exhausted, after a harassing march lasting months, arriving in the vicinity of Cartagena and waiting in vain for the help promised him by the cruiser *Alcón*.

During the last few days far-away storms had agitated the ocean, and their traces could be perceived in the high seas that came smashing against the coasts and harbors not very distant from Curaçao.

It seemed almost as though the ocean still retained a mute kind of anger, and as though its waves were muttering curses and maledictions, preparatory to carrying out definite plans of vengeance.

After leaving Curaçao and being on the open sea Roberto did not fail to hear once more the odd rhythm of the ship's engines. True, at first everything went well. The throbs of the engines were regular and similar to the pulsations of a healthy person. But in a short while they changed to irregular motions, the thumping of the machinery became strong and weak by turns, and the whole action sounded more like the plaints and snuffing of a sick man.

Roberto passed long spells in the chart room of Captain Müller, who was always cheerful and amusing, diverting him with his light chatter, notably with his gay recollections of famous musicians and dancers. But the weather became threatening. The sun blinked from a murky sky pale and uncertain, and the mist which permanently enwrapped the horizon, appeared to Roberto of bad augury. It was not long before the *Alcón* was the toy of a violent storm. And the crew became convinced that the vessel would soon be in the midst of an approaching hurricane from the Caribbean Sea.

The evening came, and the *Flying Dutchman* creaked and leaped about in a fantastic manner, so that it looked as though she would soon go to pieces. Frequently powerful waves would

sweep over the whole bridge, until to remain there was almost impossible. At other times the vessel would be lifted up to the very summit of a mountain of water, remain there for a second quite steady, and would then be hurled down into a very abyss that threatened to engulf it. At such times there would be felt a tremendous shock, and the screw would furiously turn with lightning speed within the void, being unable to reach the surface of the sea and aid in the progress of the vessel.

Outside there was impenetrable obscurity, the roaring of the tempest in the rigging, and the constant pounding of the waves whose spume, like delicate white lace upon the black waves, floated upon the dark surface. Sometimes, too, ruddy lights wandered like specters across the tragic horizon. . . .

Night came. The obscurity was complete, the furor of the storm increased.

Flashes of lightning crossed each other in the heavens, and cleaved the dense mist in all directions, coming often up the farthest portion of the firmament, like magic lighting up for instants, the infinite blackness. The waves grew in size and terrific power, rose towards the sky, became veritable mountains, then returned on their path, and through the darkened ocean there ran frightful bellowings, terrifying crashes, hoarse thunderings.

Suddenly Roberto smelt the odor of smoke, coming from rags or timber afire. He went on deck, then all about the ship, exploring it from end to end. Nothing. And he was returning satisfied that there was no cause for disquiet, when he saw issuing out of a skylight in the stern a whole whirl of sparks which went scattering their fugitive light over the wide expanse of the black waters.

After a cry of alarm, "Fire on board," he quickly slipped down the hatchway, and struggling with the smoke which almost stifled him, he got to the hold of the ship. On opening the door of the store room, where the war stores and clothing outfits were kept, he was driven back by the flames that tried with a terrible roar to find egress.

"The munitions!"

He ran back in search of the crew in order to organize an attempt to quench the fire. In one of the passages through

which he ran half suffocated, the flames burned his shoulders. The fire blew from point to point.

On the bridge he met sailors who were already paralyzed with terror, endeavoring to find means to escape. Groups of them were already disputing among themselves the forcible possession of the boats suspended from the sides of the ship, and tried to launch them overboard, while others were grasping life savers. . . . All was confusion, disorder, futile bustle.

The flames were increasing in size and fury steadily, spread over the surface of the sea and, being reflected in the water, looked like patches of blood.

Roberto, his revolver in hand, and in a voice whose energetic sound amazed himself, succeeded at last in exacting obedience from this crazed multitude, in keeping them under control, infusing them with courage, and convincing them of the uselessness of all efforts to try and dominate the fire that were not made under his command.

"To the pumps! To the hatches!" he shouted. "Cut off the fire! . . . Overboard with the munitions!"

Such were his brief orders, his battle plan. And the crew, accustomed to obey, electrified by will stronger than their own, and now recovered from their first panic, went each to his appointed place on board, in order and silence. And a short while later a group of them succeeded in saving the munition stores out of the hold. Others were busily at work at the pumps and the shock of the spouting masses of water was heard, while hatchets and axes with which to cut off flaming parts of the deck or rigging could be seen in the sinewy hands of the sailors.

But in spite of such strenuous efforts the fire advanced with amazing swiftness. The strong wind sweeping over the whole deck from the stern, the flames spread over the whole vessel, growing constantly in power and at last wrapping everything in a mantle of smoke and fire. Then, as a last resort, Roberto gave orders to tack, so as to present the whole front to the hurricane. Then the flames retired towards the stern, leaving the bow and the center of the vessel free and thus diminishing the danger. And the thought came to Roberto's mind that this frail vessel, now wandering about without goal in the immensity of the ocean, battling with the pitiless waves, shaken by the



whirlwind and lighted solely by a trail of fire, was certainly a nautical phantom, such as the *Flying Dutchman* of the legend was said to be.

Meanwhile the work of fighting the flames went on. Thanks to these strenuous endeavors and to the skilful maneuver of exposing the bow of the ship to the full power of the hurricane, Roberto succeeded at last in confining the conflagration to the stern. There, however, it still raged unrestrained. The mizzen mast, half devoured by the flames, was on the point of crashing down right into the engine room, but in the very nick of time a plucky sailor succeeded in cutting the ropes which held this mast, thus letting it roll into the sea.

Suddenly a flash of lightning, a shock, a detonation. . . . Had the munition stores caught fire? . . . Each thought his last hour had arrived. Terror stalked once more in the ranks. Their efforts in fighting the conflagration relaxed. Disorder reigned. Everybody came and went at his pleasure and crowded and shouted without listening to commands.

Roberto for the second time restored the spirit of his crew. He proved to these crazed men that merely a heap of machine gun munition, left inadvertently on deck, had exploded, and made them understand that only the disregard of fear and death, self-denial, a common effort, could save them all from destruction, whereas selfishness and unreasoning fear, as well as work done in a haphazard manner, would mean disaster for them all.

Thus again the panic subsided, and the joint fight against the common danger, the fire, began in real earnest. All worked with great energy. It was evident that a new spirit had been infused into these bodies exhausted by so many hours of hard and unremitting labor. Not a single one among them who did not bear tokens of this great struggle. They all were half naked, with their hair singed, with faces bathed in perspiration, covered with ashes and cinders, or showed wounds that bled profusely or their bare flesh covered with horrible burns.

The bustle on board kept these poor fellows constantly on the move, obliging them to watch carefully the most exposed and dangerous points assailed by the flames, while all the time they were between two equally menacing dangers: death by fire or death by drowning.

The flames which as yet they were unable to subdue, scorched their faces and cut them off from all relief, and the sinister gleaming and dancing tongues illumined the exposed flesh, while they cast the men's lower extremities into deep shadows.

Towards midnight the storm began to abate its fury, and then the wind took to shifting about rapidly. The flames then broke out afresh in all their terror, and spread anew over other parts of the vessel. Their size, too, increased, splitting into several wild holocausts, flared up and diminished in an irregular manner, and threatening every instant to make one restless sweep along the whole ship.

Roberto, who had noticed the complete absence of Captain Müller for some time, went to look for him at his post of duty, but could not find him. He went downstairs to the dining-room, and there he found him, emptying, tumbler after tumbler, the choice liquors with which, at his suggestions, the ship had been supplied at Curaçao. He received Roberto with an affectionate tenderness, calling him either "Your Majesty" or "Maestro Wagner." Terror and the wine cup jointly had produced in him a profound mental disturbance. That feminine soul of his, made only for the emotions and the delights of art, was not able to confront death face to face.

Becoming aware that the conflagration had taken on new life, this odd captain had a hallucination: he plunged on deck, but thought himself at the theater, where he imagined himself directing a minuet, a particular one with which, in times past, he used to earn great applause. His diseased imagination had overshadowed all fear and danger, and what his eyes beheld seemed to him one of those Wagnerian scenes upon which the ample means of Louis II of Bavaria had been squandered. His distorted fancy grasped this whole terrible apparatus of the raging conflagration on board merely as a piece of decorative scenery. The sea was to him a stage setting, and those men scorched and bleeding and in rags who were desperately contending against the devouring heat and flame, were to him nothing but actors instead of strugglers in a gigantic duel.

On deck the captain of this fantastic vessel was endeavoring, on the points of his toes, to teach a certain dance step. He

bent his ear to listen to the supposed ballet music, he indicated the measure and the time of it with great and patient minuteness. He spoke, in an affectionate voice, to one side and the other. He showed again and again, the figures of his dance, and put in their proper places his imaginary ballerinas. He raised his hands as though conducting a bride to the altar with delicate grace, and to wind it all up, he broke out in fits of laughter and applause.

Just before break of day, the wind had shifted completely, which permitted Roberto to change the course for Cartagena, without the danger of the fire on board invading the vessel in other quarters. The fire, in fact, which by now, thanks to energetic action, had been confined to one part of its hull alone, at last, deprived of material on which to feed, went out entirely.

The rising sun, lighting up those vast spaces previously a prey to the hurricane, now shone with great splendor upon the grateful ocean. Above, the national flag of blue; below, the waves gilt by the glorious rays of the sun, and the vessel itself, wounded and consumed, leaving in its wake small clouds of ill-smelling smoke, with its crew utterly spent by herculean labors, despoiled forever of its thick curtains and marble toilet tables, of its cozy divans and soft carpets, of those hidden spots where Roberto had fancied hearing whispering, feminine giggling and caresses. . . .

Far away on the horizon appeared now the uncertain lines of the Colombian mountains. So far it was, however, but a narrow ribbon which by and by was to widen out until it presented, in light and shade, the details of the coast.

As the vessel proceeded on her course, Roberto was enabled to fix with absolute certainty the end of the journey, and already he thought he could distinguish with his glass at a point in his field of vision which corresponded to the exact side of Cartagena, a dense smoke, indications of extensive fighting going on there. As he advanced farther, he could hear, in confirmation of his surmises, a long and steady roar, like distant thunder. Urged on by his anxiety, he made up his mind to overcome every obstacle in order to be there in time, and at the risk of flying up into the air with his queer craft, he gave instructions to speed up the engines to their

maximum capacity. And then the cruiser *Alcón* exerted itself like a man in a fever, puffing and blowing and cleaving the water like a superannuated racing yacht. The engine thumps with a violence probably never before shown, and the screw whirls with lightning speed. Roberto, it is true, can hear, through all the clatter and noise, something like groans of fatigue emitted by this craft debilitated by age, death throes that foretell speedy dissolution — this craft has of late been nearly annihilated by the hurricane and half destroyed by internal combustion.

But still he steadily advanced, hastening through the waves, until, the coast itself now reached, he was able to penetrate without trouble, into the bay by way of its narrow channel.

He approached with his vessel as closely as he could those places where the combat was raging with greatest fury, and by sending at close range into the ranks of the besieging forces a number of well-aimed shots, using for the purpose his machine guns, he inflicted severe punishment on the enemy. The latter did not count on this attack from the rear, while they had already been outclassed by the forces of General Ronderos. Dismay seized them. General Ronderos, in fact, had arrived but three days before in the vicinity of Cartagena, and had pledged himself to fight desperately in order to defeat the enemy and raise the siege of this important harbor city. A part of his forces, indeed, had already broken the opposing ranks and reached the walled and fortified center of the city, coming most opportunely to the aid of the exhausted and outnumbered garrison of Cartagena. The rest of the besieged forces had been maneuvering in the open field against superior forces to defeat the assaults upon the place.

Since the arrival of Ronderos the fighting on both sides had been of a most desperate nature, and at the moment when Roberto came to his friend's aid, the battle was still undecided. The forces of Polanco, who was directing the siege, and who was both brave and able, had exerted themselves to their utmost.

Amongst the powerful instruments of the attack upon Cartagena Polanco had also used those vessels seized on the Magdalena River and the dredging boats of the Canalization Com-

pany, which, armed and fitted out as war vessels, had been utilized in a bombardment of the forts of Cartagena.

Some of these small vessels were pursued down the bay by the *Alcón*, and sunk by artillery fire, while others, thanks to their low draft, were able to escape from the combat. With pain Roberto recognized among these craft the *Bellegarde* and the *Inés*, as well as the dredges, and ordered them at once to be fired upon, destroying thus his own property.

The opportune arrival of the cruiser *Alcón* and Roberto's energetic and skilful attacks decided the victory in favor of General Ronderos.

At the reports of the first shots Captain Müller awakened from his dreams, and in the midst of his mental derangement he understood, with a half-light of tottering reason, that a battle was going on and that it was his duty, both as a military man and a captain of this vessel, to take his place in this fight. His first idea, therefore, was to put on his uniform. He chose to appear in proper guise, his most elegant outfit. Thus he came on deck, in pumps, silk stockings, short breeches, and a sword, while his bosom was adorned with several decorations; the memorial medal of Wagner, the order of musical merit of Bavaria, and the royal order of St. Cecilia.

Attired in all this splendor he presented himself with great solemnity and a commanding mien.

The first thing that met his artist's eye, was the vivid blue of the bay, slightly stirred by the breeze, the irregular shape of the city, with its girdle of walls, and upon the neighboring hills, the forts. Then outside, giving animation to this picture, the besieging army, the glitter of its arms, the bright colors of its uniforms, and the smoke clouds on the battle field which, driven by the wind, were dispersed into a semi-transparent veil, here and there torn to shreds.

The clatter of the infantry, the trumpet blasts, the shouting and shrieking of the combatants, the smash of the waves against the docks and beach, and the echoes of the guns, this entire medley of noises that were acute, grave and solemn, seemed to Müller, educated in the art of Wagner, a sublime symphony, a grandiose disharmony, a plenitude of sounds which, in the exaltation of his madness, made his entire being tremble, in-

toxicated him, shook him to the point of a veritable paroxysm of enthusiasm.

The stage setting, the drama itself, and all this singular music . . . this meant to him a dream realized, meant the new art, the music capable of furnishing the exact expression of the indefinite. And he remained a long while there carried beyond himself, as if on wings, without taking account of the danger, when he suddenly heard near him a cry of intense pain. One of his own crew, a handsome German youth, lay in the convulsions of death at his feet.

The blood which escaped in streams from his death wound, was forming on deck a pool of vivid red, and then ran off in thin rills, finally filtering, drop by drop, into the sea. The bright scarlet of the blood made a striking contrast with the excessive pallor of the dying man, across whose face there passed rapidly snowy waves of increasing feebleness, and from whose blue eyes the light and expression now fled.

Death put into those eyes a fixed look of dread, reproach, infinite bitterness.

Müller observed all this with affright. His soul wounded, he returned to reality, and in spite of his mental aberration, he comprehended all that was passing.

Upon the beach there lay many dead and motionless, or else they moved about in the same appalling manner as the young German had done a moment before in his agony. A number of dead bodies were floating on the water, at the mercy of the waves.

The shells fired by the *Alcón* were tearing great holes in the ranks of the assaulting army, and many of these, taken by surprise at the great losses sustained by their own side, fled with great speed, went into hiding, looked for shelter, and threw their arms away.

And yet those men were for Müller beings rendered powerless, against whom he harbored no sentiment of hostility, but on the contrary feelings of profound pity.

On board also the effects of the struggle were increasing. Marines and gunners were filling the vessel with sharp cries, as some of them were hit, and their blood, running along the deck in thick patches, was feeding the waves.

In the delicate soul of the old artist compassion conquered fear. He wanted to bend down over the dying, render them help, ease their pains, receive their last wishes. Stumbling and falling over the blood which deluged the deck, he succeeded in coming near some of these unfortunates, took them by the hand, but found these already cold, wanted to bathe their foreheads, but discovered them clammy with the perspiration of death.

Unable to alleviate these agonies, he rose, gazed at himself, and saw that his own hands, his clothing, his entire person had become soaked with blood, and then, remembering his authority as captain of this ship, an idea of remorse, of grave responsibility, shot through his head, like a red-hot iron. "Perhaps he himself was guilty as well?"

His madness broke out, and he began to shout in a powerful voice, as if to dominate his own awe,— yelling that they must suspend this battle, that the guns must be silenced, that this cruel mission was not the one the *Flying Dutchman* was built for. But nobody listened to him. The vessel seemed to share the enthusiasm of its crew. And like them, intoxicated by the fight, by the fumes of the blood spilt and by the smoke of the powder, the vessel, in a final impetus accelerated her artillery discharges, vomited death, and like a monster mutilated during combat, which in its agony still deals deadly blows, rushed about the sea seeking the enemy and destroying him.

Müller thought of the horrible sin of this vessel made alone for art,— that is to say, for that which is generous and kind, and that now it had failed in its mission and committed an eternal crime: the crime of war. . . .

Tormented by remorse, feeling weighed down by the heavy burden of sin, he pronounced upon himself in his demented conscience a sentence from which there was to be no appeal: death for the vessel, and death for himself, and since both had been stained with the same guilt, both should share the identical expiation.

He ran down into the engine room.

A moment later, the vessel shook and vibrated like a living being, and then it came to a dead stop. The boilers blew up. The heart of the vessel and the heart of Müller had both ceased to beat at the same instant.

The sentence had been carried out.

CHAPTER XXXV

PUERTO BORJA

"ROBERTO!"

"General!"

They silently embraced each other.

Roberto had escaped unharmed from the catastrophe of the *Flying Dutchman*, because at the moment when Captain Müller, the firemen and machinists had perished, scalded or burned by the explosion of the engines, he had happened to be on deck. He disembarked as soon as the enemy left the beach free. He now set eyes on the General with a feeling of profound sadness, and felt in embracing him that the old warrior had become a veritable bag of bones. The gray hair which he formerly wore close clipped, had turned completely white, and now floated about his neck. His face was ashen, the eyes sunk, and his whole appearance now expressed weariness and depression.

Ronderos laid his hands on the shoulders of Roberto, and then contemplated him with intense affection. How well this sunburnt skin became his young friend, how manly and how full of laughing humor he looked, for all of which the open sunlight, the hardships of a campaign, and its dangers as well were responsible.

"And how about Casanova, and Chispas?" asked Roberto.

"They have not arrived here. I presume they are either prisoners or dead."

Together the two scaled the walls of the city. The General gazed attentively over the whole field of battle. The bodies of the dead which lay down below at their feet emitted an insupportable, fetid stench. Many other corpses were floating on the surface of the water in the bay, rigid, with eyes wide open, as though scanning the sky.

For the greater part these dead were negroes, with their bellies inflated and their mouths covered with bloody foam.



The general, wiping off the perspiration which was drenching his face said quietly:

"Now Polanco will probably go to Barranquilla and Calamar, in order to concentrate his forces. . . . I know that he has a huge store of munition and war material on board the *Bellegarde* and *Inés*. . . . No matter, from now on begins their downfall. I have just learned that Panama, too, has been recovered.

He spoke with visible fatigue, and it sounded as though the words died on his lips.

"General," said Roberto, "you ought to devote yourself for the present to the reestablishment of your health. Your frame, at last worn out by the ceaseless toil entailed, absolutely requires a rest. . . .

"True, . . . as soon as I have cleared the river. . . . And you yourself? What do you mean to do now?"

"If you will give me permission to do so, I want to fulfil a duty of friendship, namely, rescue *Bellegarde*. I want to start this very night. I mean to return to Tolima by way of the Cauca."

The general hesitated a moment, and then looking at him affectionately, he replied:

"Are you going to leave me?"

"Yes, General, with great regret. But it is indispensable. I fear much for the life of that friend to whom I and the country owe so much. . . . Another request, General: I want to bury Müller . . . give him a grand burial. . . . In place of gun salutes he must have Wagnerian music . . . and please tell the orchestra that if they do not play well, he will without doubt rise from his coffin."

The revolutionists had retired from Cartagena by three roads: the railway, the dike and the Bocas de Ceniza, and then, by order of Polanco, had gathered all their forces at Calamar.

But Polanco's retirement had been slow and difficult work. He had to see to the safety of the vessels and to the thorough destruction of all the property owned by the Canalization company. It was necessary to destroy all of their finished and half-finished work so as to remove for good and all this powerful rival of the Sabanilla railroad, in the purchase and

ownership of which Polanco had a share. Meanwhile Landáburo, having returned from Curaçao, had resumed the chief command of the Revolutionists in his capacity of provisional president. The church of Calamar had to serve as barracks for their general staff. In the sacristy, converted into a stable, the horses were taken care of, and on top of the altars the principal commanders had their couches for the night placed. The orderlies with their women occupied the rest of the building, where some improvised fireplaces served for the preparation of meals, with good dry wood obtained from the furniture, the doors and saints' images.

Landáburo had his own bed put up upon the main altar, and from there he dictated a proclamation to Vidaurre, his adjutant and business partner.

His proclamation read:

"Citizens of Calamar: Greetings to you! From the day I was born I have longed with my soul to become acquainted with your city, the same city that has since become the cradle of the Revolution. Duty compelled me to remain in the eastern part of the country, while desire and sympathy drew me towards the west, and I was unable to solve the problem how to be at the same time in two different points. A predicament which I have now reason to bless. For here you have me.

"Blessed predicament, I say, although old Ronderos no doubt by this time has published bulletins filled with stupendous falsehoods and assigned in it a grand and thundering part to himself, in the way of Tartarizing the campaign, and in which he has likewise declared that his Pretorian guards and his own clever plans have driven us out of Cartagena. He most likely is at this moment celebrating our defeat with deep draughts of liquor, because the powder which they do not know how to burn in serious fighting they waste in vain glorifications and tricks.

"Our brave soldiers quietly left the place when it seemed good to them, and the Pretorians remained behind within its walls, of which they wanted to make their Torres Vedras. There has been nothing more than a change of scenery.

"It is certain that the Janissaries will this time fight with tenacity, driven on by Catholic fanaticism and in like degree by alcohol. But he who claims that we have come here in consequence of defeat is badly mistaken.

"The loads of lassos which the Tiger of the Capitol (who has put a price upon my head) has accumulated for the purpose of rendering us powerless of motion, will be links in the chain of triumph with which will end this night of slavery.

"Since friends in misfortune are given to misstatements, there has not lacked at least one person in our ranks, General Polanco, who has spoken

ill of me. This general is a leader whom I esteem and respect and with whom I have had but a few childish quarrels, and these must be covered with the cold lava of the years.

"Let Polanco believe me unfit, let him deem me only good enough for second place, all right; but to charge me with dishonesty!! Not on your life! Polanco is a proud fellow who does not even know the ABC of war, and in whose brain a plan of campaign has never even been outlined with precision.

"Before the walls of Cartagena the army was grand, the army was admirable, the army was everything, the leader less than nothing. General Polanco knows only how to plan campaigns with pin pricks upon maps. He ought to have taken the city at any peril, sneaking in, if necessary, through a crevice, because, as Pelopidas says: 'When a lion's skin is not available, the skin of a she-mouse must do.'

"Citizens of Calamar: The Revolution represents the only legitimacy there is, the only real right possible and admissible in this free land of ours. Do not forget that!

"With an army that is the most warlike and formidable ever seen in this Republic, with twenty vessels armed for warfare and war supplies in unparalleled masses, I am about to oust the rotten and tottering government at Bogotá, in spite of all the Pretorian battalions on the Atlantic coast, and will not leave one single stone standing of the fastness of Catholic fanaticism, the ally of our adversaries, which has enticed them into numberless shameful crimes, and which has employed them as its tool of personal ambitions. I advance upon Bogotá with the sword of the Destroying Angel, to uproot despotism, which like a volcano spreads its mud over the adjoining territory. Bogotá is to-day the crater of a fanaticism with desires of an expansion based on political and religious grounds, as Madrid was in the days of Philip II, and it was only by means of an international policy that that disturbing and infecting center was finally rendered impotent. For that redeeming work I declare as a good patriot that I shall make common cause with those foreign governments likewise threatened, and that in such honorable company I shall put foot in that accursed city. If we have conquered them in a hundred battles with but ten cartridges per soldier, how much better shall we be able to do with the ample munition supplies we now carry with us?

"We lack food and rations, because patriotism does not provide generously for its maltreated servants, but for us it is to-day sufficient, in order to be amply paid, to be greeted with a smile between pictures of happiness, bestowed by the beautiful ladies of Calamar, and to-morrow, instead of food and rations, to be greeted by another smile from the lips of the no less beautiful ladies of Bogotá!

"Cursed be he who still speaks of reconciliation, of peace, of disarmament and compromise!

"Soldiers, at them!

"Long live the Revolution!"

Landáburo dictated his proclamation abed, carelessly, without much forethought. In him, the actor, the man of the-

atricalism, there was never anything asleep. From time to time he interrupted himself, dictated new orders, asked for data regarding the forces that were still on the way to Calamar, or made dispositions as to the march on the following day. On certain occasions he let fly malicious phrases against other leaders. With his inferior officers he discussed intimate details about the conduct of Polanco, or cracked aggressive jests at his expense. To show his great erudition as a navigator or engineer, he gave most minute orders regarding the handling of the engines of the vessels under his control, or else instructions to the captains present about their future maneuvers.

"Read this, Colonel," he now said, "read all you have written. I do not remember what I have dictated."

When the reading was finished, Landáburo sprang up with a bound, and exclaimed:

"Simply admirable. Send this at once to the printer without altering a single comma. . . . And now for the formal declaration of loyalty which all the leaders are to sign me this very night, including, of course, the officers of the army. I am going to dictate that. Write down, Colonel:

"We present to you our enthusiastic salute as provisional president of Colombia, and we acknowledge that you have dedicated your life to the disinterested service of Revaluation. In you we have the varied elements with which we are going to crush constitutional despotism.

"We know that your protests of Curaçao in favor of peace were fictitious, mere traps with which to deceive the tyrants.

"With you at the head we shall triumph, or else mingle our blood with yours. You alone unite the qualities of the true general and tactician with those of the thinker, philosopher and polemist. The steel of your pen is as finely and justly tempered as that of your sword. Talent, energy, valor and both private and public virtues are in you legendary, and you possess them in eminent degree. For this reason you are as invincible in war as you were in peace. We are ten thousand men, but with you at the head we shall be one hundred and ten thousand soldiers.

"Let this spontaneous manifestation which all the leaders and officers of the army of the Revaluation and liberty offer to you be a slight offset against the calumnies of which you have been made the victim by some persons envious of your glory, persons who have spoken of you as a speculator, deserter, and apostate.

"Long live the provisional president, our invincible chief!"

Villafañe hastened from the room to obtain all the signatures and left Landáburo walking to and fro in the presbytery

of the church building. Landáburo recollected and tried to imitate the attitude of Napoleon, the great Napoleon, on the eve of great battles. His hands were clasped behind, his gaze was directed into the infinite, as though contemplating visions of glory, classic battles which for simple mortals were invisible. Now and then he would let that noble head of his drop on his breast.

After a long while Villafañe returned, with an aggrieved look.

"Do you bring me those signatures?"

"No, General."

"What do they want? What do they say?"

"They are of opinion that although the praise heaped on yourself may not be excessive, there is a measure of indelicacy about the whole matter. But, they assert, this document ought to be worded so as not to wound the susceptibility of the other chiefs and leaders, in order not to endanger the harmony that ought to reign in an army."

"Well, I do not accept any other formula," shouted Landáburo, beside himself with fury. "I am not a prodigal son. . . . Give that declaration to me. . . . I do not want them to sign anything. I do not!"

And taking the writing, driveling with anger, stamping the floor like a small child, he tore the paper to bits, threw it on the ground, tramped on it, and shrieked:

"The whole Revaluation Party is nothing but a parcel of envious fools."

A moment later he remembered that by his conduct he was compromising the dignity of a high post, and also the sympathies of those who might be listening, and he therefore changed his tone, approached Villafañe, and continued:

"See here, my friend, I am not merely a party leader. That is a mold too narrow for me. That irks me, that bothers me as if I were trying to wear the same small suit I wore when a child. I am an eagle enclosed in the egg of a canary. I can only be the chief of the nation, its head. I am a national figure, and those men, those imbeciles, do not understand me."

On the following day ten vessels armed for war left Calamar, and went off towards the interior of the Republic, and by order of Landáburo the four thousand men who had concen-

trated in that harbor went along. As they advanced up the river, the latter began to show the luxuriant wealth of its shores: splendid panoramas, pastures until recently filled with grazing cattle, vast beaches on which whole tribes of alligators were sunning themselves; walls of verdure that bordered the waters; scores of settlements abandoned by their inhabitants; mountains which stood clear against a brilliant sky; avenues of gigantic cedars standing in regular groups as in a park; dusky landscapes in which palm groves detached themselves with their trembling fan-like foliage; roofs and cupolas of dense greenery, garlands of vines completely covered with brilliant blossoms of butterfly shape, festoons, and cavities closed by purple curtains. . . . Along the whole extent of the river the methodical and thorough destruction of the work done by the Canalization company, as well as the machinery and appliances used by them, could be observed: dredges gone, dikes annihilated, very strong fences torn down, plantations, buildings, powerful steam works — all wiped out, together with the last traces even of the canal toilers; millions in value utterly destroyed, titanic efforts come to nought.

One morning General Nichols, commanding the vessel acting as advance guard, reported to Landáburo that he had found an enemy encampment. Landáburo, who went in a fine boat named after him, hastened up in order to be present at the reconnaissance. He perceived upon the right shore of the river, at Puerto Borja, the camp, and amid the fortifications the company building, with tents and bonfires all about it, and behind the broad avenue leading up from the landing stage, there were visible a hill, trenches and redoubts for defensive purposes.

Immediately Landáburo issued orders for the commanding officers to assemble, and when they had met, he distributed amongst them a paper on the cover of which was to be read: "Plan of attack at Puerto Borja."

"Foreseeing this fight here — for I do foresee everything . . . I had these instructions drawn up, gentlemen," he then addressed them all.

Then he made one of the aides of his immense general staff read the document in a loud voice, as follows:

"1.) The divisions Chancos and General Mosquera will disembark below the great enemy encampment, will then seize the building of the Aserradero and remain there one hour, thirty-five minutes.

"2.) The divisions Landáburu, Tuso Gutierrez and First of January will disembark on the left shore of the river, and will erect trenches of sand in sacks weighing not more than two arrobas. The companies will take positions keeping a distance of one meter twenty-five centimeters between each.

"3.) As a signal of reconnaissance there will be used one long trumpet blast and one note lower for attention, and as answer, another long blast and two high notes. The password for the same purpose will be the sublime one of Cambronne at Waterloo, and will be answered by 'no surrender.'"

Just then a whistle was heard at some distance. It was a steamer coming under full steam. One could hear the thumping of the wheel as it beat the water rapidly. Soon this vessel had advanced in line with the one in which Landáburu was giving his instructions. General Polanco sprang on deck and flashed one of his sharp glances upon those around the chief commander.

"What is the meaning of this?" he then asked.

And Landáburu answered:

"We are going to attack the enemy here entrenched in Puerto Borja. I have given out a plan of attack in writing, one which goes into the most minute details, so that in case we should lose the battle it would not be through lack of foresight on my part."

"Attack? But . . . ? Did you not state in your proclamation at Calamar that we were going to Bogotá? That was what was agreed upon,—the thing fixed. The friends there are now waiting for us in order to receive the immense munition supplies you promised. A misfortune here would mean our ruin. We ought not to risk the last resources of the Revolution. Disembarkment in Honda would be of infallible effect. . . . It is for you, General, to fulfil your promise. Let us go to the heart of matters, to the capital, which is without military protection, and let us leave this and the Coast to the generals of the Government."

"I take the liberty, General, to present this plan to you, which I have just submitted to the divisionaries and battalion chiefs."

Without taking it, Polanco responded:

"Do you also win battles upon maps and charts and with stickpins?"

Landáburo took pains to defend his plan. He was wounded in his pride as the "foremost South American tactician," and thus, with energetic gesticulations, he entered into a technical exposition in which recurred again and again his favorite expressions:

"Stimulate an attack," "the extreme right," "let the vanguard file past," "formal attack," "overwhelm the flank," "hurl back detachments," "fall upon them," . . . "and forward!"

The discussion waxed bitter. Some of the commanding officers sided with Landáburo, others with Polanco, the latter keeping his equanimity despite the insults contained in the proclamation of Calamar.

"They are always finding pretexts not to fight those who show some courage," said Landáburo, "but I know the reason why."

"And what is it?" asked Polanco, nettled beyond endurance and confronting the other.

"Fear, General."

"All right. Let us fight, then. . . . That will show who the timorous are. Everybody disembark!" he shouted to his men. "Let us take the fort." His stentorian voice rang out like a trumpet. "Let us fight. . . . But without those paper plans. . . . To the fort!"

But before leaving the room he called Landáburo aside.

"We two, General, shall have a little account to settle . . . but not here . . . not in the presence of the army, because we should finish with it. . . ."

"If you wish, General, we shall embrace in front of the leaders. I could issue another proclamation which might be called: 'The Handshaking.' . . ."

But Polanco turned his back on him and no longer heard Landáburo's proposals. He rushed forth shouting: "To the trenches! . . . And no looking back!"

He had the trumpeter give the proper signals, and the army, accustomed to follow this fiery leader, hurried its disembarkation with enthusiasm.

Within a few instants the fort was swarming. The cannon



balls began again their thunderous music, and this was soon after drowned by the multitudinous roll of the rifle fire, volley upon volley. The attacking soldiers rose in serried ranks against the fortifications, hastening, crowding each other. In the *mêlée* the different battalions were mingled; the marching was done in disorder, without a concerted movement, like that of a huge street mob. Only one kind of unity there was among them: the pushing on to victory; eagerness to arrive with the swiftest possible haste at the trenches, and with this in mind they forgot everything else. They stared at what was ahead of them. They were bound to crumple up the enemy forces, to decimate them, destroy them.

In the opposing camp Borrero was strolling among his batteries, imperturbable, serene. His guns worked like a charm and with stupendous effect: loading, pointing, shooting, like clockwork.

In the wall of flesh that was advancing rapidly, there were already openings, breaches. The assailants were swaying. The bayonets were flashing in the sunlight, held high. The holes in the wall were closed up, and the mass was again advancing, steadily, irresistibly. Only death stopped them. Their ranks were thinning, but there was no halt. Many tottered, many fell, their feet stumbled over dead or dying, the wounded shrieked or gasped with the pain of their injuries. But the wave of raging humanity was irresistible. The fort was now full of attacking masses. In this exaltation of enthusiasm, in this paroxysm of force and violence no words were spoken, gestures were the sole language, and these said all, fascinated all, pushed them on to their murderous work, electrified them.

Polanco was always in the front ranks, brandishing his sword with furor and this spectacle of their general thus exposing himself to danger, drove his men recklessly on, and they climbed the steep height of the fort embankment on and on, to conquer or die with their chief. With a mighty leap Polanco is now on top of the trench, . . . his men are shouting "Victory," but in the act itself Polanco is seen throwing his arms wide apart, and collapsing in a heap.

The death of the favorite leader of the army, however, in-

stead of damping their courage, merely serves to inflame them, and with an access of furious rage, with an impetus that nothing can stop they rush on like bulls into the arena.

"We are going to revenge our general," they howl, and with fiercer energy than ever they hurl themselves upon the enemy host. There was a terrific shock, a clash that was deafening. . . . The soldiers of Alejandro fired when the muzzles of their rifles almost touched their quarry. But despite all that their commanders could do, they began to give way. The red flag of the Revolution waved in the redoubts on top of the fortifications over piles and piles of the slain.

Alejandro and Borrero reformed their broken ranks. With threats and entreaties they succeeded in stopping the flight of their men, infusing new courage into the hearts even of the most frightened. Borrero, carried away with anger, ran his sword through two of his fugitive soldiers. The veterans gathered for a counterattack. They turned their faces towards the enemy, and in their turn assailed those who sat in their own strongholds. Quickly they recovered the territory they had lost and made themselves masters of the heights. And now a struggle, body against body, like two enraged duellists, set in up there which exceeded in grimness and tenacity anything yet enacted. For the possession of a few feet of ground; for inches even. Each side fought like veritable fiends. Swaying to and fro, yielding and gaining anew, the two opponents did their utmost in stubborn valor. There was now no gun fire, only fighting hand to hand, in the silence of supreme effort and despair. Only the sinister clatter of steel meeting steel, bayonet or machete dropping from nerveless grasp, the groaning of men desperately wounded or dying, the shriek of mortal pain or of victory,—these were all the sounds in this bloody drama of mass murder.

Casanova, who, on disembarking at San Pedro del Sinu, had fallen into the power of the Revolutionist forces, had been taken prisoner and kept on board the *Bellegarde* which, with the *Inés*, contained, as he knew, immense quantities of munition. Thanks to the carelessness of his keepers, whose attention was completely engaged by the tremendous struggle above described, which they could observe from near-by, Casanova, who enjoyed

a certain degree of liberty within the vessel, could also mark the progress of the obstinate fight and saw with pain how his own friends were driven out of their trenches.

In that instant he determined to carry out a plan which had previously occurred to him as a possibility. The place where the munitions were deposited was at that instant unlocked and easily accessible, in order to serve the necessities of the combat itself. Casanova took two gallons of petroleum and cautiously made his way into the hold of the vessel, where he poured the oil over the boxes and other containers that enclosed the munitions, gunpowder, etc. Then he used a handful of straw to set the whole afire. When he saw the flames leaping up, sure of the success of his plan, he jumped into the river, swam across, gained the other shore, and there hid behind the thick trunk of a tree.

The ship's hold took fire like tinder, and the vessel was in an inkling one mass of flames. Casanova saw how the bow of the vessel suddenly lifted high. He threw himself down on the ground in order to escape flying munitions or débris, when the ship went up in smoke. . . . There was a tremendous explosion, shaking the mountains even and making the very soil tremble.

An instant later the fire leaped over to the *Inés*, and that ship was, within the space of a few minutes, likewise an ocean of flames. Both vessels floating slowly on the water, drifted down the river, lower and lower.

The combatants had heard the first explosion which stunned and frightened them for a moment, and later on the second. Shouts were raised: "The vessels are burning! The munitions are flying up in the air! All retreat is cut off!" And these cries spread and soon carried despair into the ranks of the Revolutionists. Panic seized them. The struggle itself ended. The forces of Polanco, now suddenly dominated by unreasoning fear, yielded the disputed territory and began to flee.

Landáburo, seeing the disaster, resolved to save at least those ships which still remained to him. He ordered them set afloat, and with the flotilla, retired once more to Calamar.

Pursuit, however, on the part of the Government forces likewise rapidly grew to unheard-of proportions; it was carried

out with an impetus, with a rage, with a frenzy almost, that were in exact proportion to the desperate character of the previous struggle. Anger at the defeat and the frightful losses sustained at the beginning of the fight pushed the soldiers of Alejandro on to indiscriminate vengeance. The intoxication of triumph dominated them, the effervescence of malice, the giddiness of murderous lust. In their hearts had broken out the rabid appetite of savage beasts. They shouted fearful deprecations, curses, maledictions at their disheartened foes, and felt an insane joy in mere destruction, in the convulsions of agony, in the noise and the bloody power of their weapons, in horrible mutilations, in hacked members.

Alejandro, for whom, to be sure, the momentary defeat of his battalions had been a keen pain, an acute shame, wounding his pride as much as if it had been a deadly and bloody insult, also felt himself enveloped for a few moments in a very clod of blood. In his bosom there raged a storm of malignant feelings, and he launched himself ferociously upon the now retreating enemy. But in this short spell of fury there appeared before his eyes and conscience the emaciated face of a loved one, with two blue eyes of unspeakable fascination. Then his soul was swept by a sentiment of compassion, and all desire for revenge was forthwith stifled.

At the risk of his own life he suddenly threw himself between the pursuer and the pursued. He held his soldiers back from further slaughter. He interposed himself between the butcher and his victim. He made his authority felt. He saved the life of the conquered. He punished those victors who were implacable.

Alejandro and General Borrerro organized the ambulance. The battlefield suddenly was invaded by stretcher-bearers and the wounded were picked up with care and conveyed to field hospitals. Alejandro even showed preference for his late enemies, and he looked for and gathered in his arms many of them, lavished caressing words on them, treated them like brothers, like equals. And as he did so he felt that the white apparition smiled approvingly.

The shadows fell on the two armies, hungry, worn out with the ferocious fighting of the day. In the silence of the night there is better heard the interminable lament rising from such

camp, a lament in which cries of pain mingle with cries of hope, with gentle sighs of approaching death,—cries like those of little children.

And meanwhile the vessels set afire slowly drift down the river, halt at times before obstacles, are delayed at banks, knock themselves against big rocks, set aflame the foliage of huge trees under whose shade they have found momentary rest. They pass on, lighting up with their gigantic luridness the lonesome spots on the long journey, and like messengers of devastation, with the noise of a cataclysm, these winged fiery heralds will tell the savage creatures of the wilderness that they may at their ease continue to watch over their domains,—that these savage forests, these immeasurable plains have once more turned away from awakening civilization and resumed their old lethargy, their animosity to all progress,—that they have dropped back into barbarism.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### ONCE MORE THE ROSES

MONTELLANO and Dolores, journeying from Bogotá to Honda, and having left behind them the small settlement of Guaduas with its little white houses, half hidden between the plumes of the bamboo plants, were now beginning to descend the steep path which, winding along finally ended on the plain that led to *El Consuelo*. To the eyes of Don Ramón and his daughter, habituated to landscapes illuminated by a tempered light such as was the case, too, in those places through which they had come, the immense panorama of the valleys along the Magdalena which now opened to their view, an unlimited phantasmagoria which in sun-swept majesty extended all the distance to the very crest of the opposite chain of tall peaks, came as a surprise.

Before reaching *El Consuelo*, they saw the building of a modest wayside inn, half screened from view by trees, and noticed with terror that its beams were charred by fire, that the roof had been likewise destroyed, that its blackened ruins lay on the ground nearby, amidst the rubbish merely some broken

poles, the fences that had enclosed a small adjoining tract of tilled land torn to fragments. On this small field there lay prone a blackish mass. The mules scented this and backed uneasily from it. Montellano whipped his team close to this forbidding spot.

"Father, oh, father," warned Dolores, turning her eyes away from the sight, "this is the inventor, it is . . ."

"Yes, it's Sánchez de Peñanegra," shrieked Montellano, horrorstruck.

They saw a dark stain on his chest, the frail, thin body stretched out, the hands very white, the face wax-like, the expression somewhat sickly and yet sweet, with its usual in-offensive placidity that the murdered man had preserved even in death.

But there now began to appear from the other direction, along the road that led upwards, dimly seen through bushes and trees, the rifles of an escort, then the hats, next the bodies of soldiers on foot, and also of three persons riding mules.

"General Ronderos," exclaimed Montellano, instinctively feeling the shock of a possible fate such as that of Peñanegra.

The veteran military leader was indeed seated on the back of a mule, his body bent and his hat falling over his face. When he had been carried close to the little house, he attempted to dismount without help, but was unable to do so, and had to accept, much to his annoyance, the assistance of his aides.

"Wounded, General?" asked Montellano, seeing him so pale and exhausted.

"No, friend," replied the other in a half-strangled voice. "It is merely the fever from down there . . . and the grief to see this part of the country in this condition."

He said no more. The aides, spreading out some clothing, made a sort of couch for their chief in the center of the room. The old general dropped down on it like a dead load, and lay there quite inanimate for a while. The crude sunlight, penetrating the space through the broken roof, glittered upon the hilt of the sword and spread itself about the somber eyes that lay deep in their sockets, imparting to the General's countenance the color of old ivory; the bony face, with its strongly pronounced cheekbones and the sharp, angular nose and forehead stood out more clearly. As he lay thus stretched out his

breath came and went feverishly, feebly, with much fatigue.

Now his army began to arrive: a mass of exhausted soldiers, some dying, others displaying horrible wounds, eaten up by fever — a grievous sight. A number of them carried two or three rifles, in order to relieve those who were too feeble to carry their own. They went up the steep slope without speaking without cheerful songs, without a smile, heads hanging low, crawling painfully along. Scarcely a groan was heard, or a moan of fatigue. All the faces bore the impress of sadness, of weariness, of death.

Just then there was seen, coming up through the waste land through which wound the path in the rear, a number of riders from among whom there could be heard, more and more distinctly, the humming and rumbling of a well-known voice. Above the rattle of the harness and the conversations of the peons, fragments of phrases found their way.

“I have enough time for everything. . . . The hospital. . . . The problem of peace. . . . A general reconciliation and embracing. . . . The model ambulance. . . . This will be for twenty years. . . .”

The voices came nearer.

“General Ronderos, here I am. . . . Here you have your friend González Mogollón, after a lapse of eight months. I am always on the road where my duty in the service of poor suffering humanity takes me . . . at the orders of the great heroes who are dying for their country. Here I have it, camp bed No. 1234 of the Model Ambulance, organized by official decree and with rules established by me, despite all my manifold and absorbing occupations. . . . What a campaign was yours, . . . we have learned of your condition. . . . This mule does not step along very well. . . . And I am all the time overcoming the most insuperable difficulties, as a recruit of the good cause should. . . . Señor Montellano, you here, too? . . . And it's easy to be seen that you are now on the way to la Danta — all that you have left, according to what you say,” and González made this last remark very deliberately.

“Yes, I'm a ruined man. . . . I have not even a place in which to lie when I am dead. I am going to bury myself, and we'll have to put another tall taper in the chapel at Danta.”

Those around the speaker smiled with a mutual smile of in-

telligence. They all knew that the millionaire, ever since the outbreak of the war, had himself spread the rumor that he was entirely ruined, so as to escape forced loans and exactions from both armies.

General Ronderos rose to leave. The cold chills had taken hold of him again. The tall bundle of bones was shaking and shivering. His teeth were chattering, and his face began to show livid spots, as though he were dying.

"Before you go away, General," said Montellano, "is the river safe? Is there no danger?"

"None whatever," replied Ronderos, stammering with the fever. "After his defeat at Puerto Borja they had been gathering the vessels that Landáburu had been seizing. . . . He himself, with a handful of followers, has taken refuge in the mountains. Good-day, gentlemen."

And he went towards his mule.

"General, the camp bed . . ."

"No, Friend González. I and a field bed? A thousand thanks."

He tried a smile, which bared his pale gums, and then went ahead, assisted by his aides. A keen physical pain of which he did not want to complain, contracted his features.

The army had formed along the road. They were going to render the honors of his rank to him.

"General," González wanted to know, "is this all that is left of the famous army of the Atlantic . . . eight thousand men. . . . I am certain . . . eight thousand outfits I handed over myself to the model workshops founded by myself, and these were sent on to Madellin more than six months ago."

"Yes, friend, . . . the famous army," replied the general, with another shudder from his fever. "You see for yourself what is left of it. A thousand men! Or rather, a thousand skeletons!"

He started to walk his mule, with his face turned towards the ranks bent deep over his beast. The commanding officers, unsheathed sword in hand, gave their commands in brief, curt sentences. The trumpets sounded the salute to the general-in-chief; it was a warlike march the stirring strains of which rose and floated away, filling the great space between the wilderness and the silence of the mountain range far off in the



distance. And at the sound of their chief's well-known voice, and the strains of that music, all those men bent and bowed, all those bodies bled almost to death, all these rows of skeletons, instinctively became erect, presented arms with trembling hands, throwing their heads back, as though galvanized, with a new spirit, a new courage, with a last fire of pride in their pupils.

The general, still bent over his saddle, shivering, passed up and down the ranks, climbed up the slope, and the trumpeters blew their longest and best, blew a blast that sounded, in face of this sinister spectacle, almost like a cry of anguish, like a last farewell to their dying chief.

They went off, disappearing in dusty distance, and soon after there could only be seen, along the crooked road they followed, the glitter of their bayonets and the white cloth of the stretchers.

Dolores took the direction of the summit which began to appear some distance off in the torrid plain. A frightful noise made her turn her eyes. The bed of withered leaves that covered the ground crackled with a multitude of scampering lizards. A very large butterfly which in balancing itself either set its velvety wings aflame with reflected sunlight or else seemed to steep their bright blue in shadow, was fluttering about near her. This small detail brought back memories of that far-away morning when, amidst the song of birds and the cheerful talk of travelers, full of zest and hopes, she had been on her way with her father to the Capital, buoyed up with vague ideas of conquest. The afternoon sun gave now trembling outlines to the distant view, was drying up the puddles near the roadside, was absorbing the vapors of the deeps, and spread through the whole atmosphere a bluish tint which, diffusing itself throughout the heated air, paled the bright yellow of the bamboo groves, the red glamour of the flowers and the metallic sheen of the palm leaves.

In her thoughts she began to compare the two panoramas, the two epochs. It was still the same landscape, the same river, which over yonder was flashing from between sandy shores,—the same clumps of groves and forests which, in diminishing sizes, were lost in the prodigious background, the same welter of summits and mountain tops, the same confused profiles of interminable mountain façades. . . . But already the symphony

of the dawn of life was gone, the merry mood that awoke her on the morrow, the idyll of the first hours, the music of the twitterings in the wilderness of cane or reeds. At present it was but the splendor of devastation; the earth itself exhausted and somnolent, enveloped in its petrified serenity; it was an amphitheater of reddish mountain sides, extenuation and fatigue, a silence of sadness which became tedious with its eternal monotony; big compact clouds, like heaps of copper, which stood out against the violet-hued shadows of the great distance.

Nothing was astir, nothing was apparently alive, nothing was singing within this enormous space gone to rest and sleep,— in this scorched world, in the dramatic wilderness of the mountain ranges, in the mournful majesty of the whole panorama, over which was floating an atmosphere of weariness and suffering, a mist of boundless despair.

She drew a parallel between the two panoramas and the two epochs. But she felt that the panorama of that morning now gone was like a landscape limned by a youthful painter possessing a vigorous hand, a hand that traced the lines with accuracy and force, which intensified the tints and gave to the colors freshness and clearness . . . while this same landscape now seemed but a copy made by the uncertain and trembling hand of an old man, who traced the outlines without firmness, and who put into all the neutral tints of his sated pupil the inertia of a worn-out heart.

All at once Dolores with a sudden dread heard shots being fired. Nothing was to be seen. Only here and there, amongst the waste places, were to be noticed flashes in the pan; puffs of smoke were rising which became more and more fiery as the shadows increased. Yonder there came out of the thicket a small band of infantrymen who started to go in the direction of *El Consuelo* along the highroad. From spot to spot they turned around, aimed and fired, and then continued mounting the heights on the same road.

The leader of this band stopped, gave several orders, and with great anger brandished his machete, at the same time threatening the fugitives. But he was unable to make them obey him. The road was soon full of people who passed in front of the house, and continued their flight up the slope.

They passed near Dolores: their appearance was that of va-

grants, clad in rags, half naked, besmeared with mire. They seemed to be hard pushed, and while struggling up the steep declivities they were panting, gazing behind them with great fear, and then resumed their flight again.

For two months now Roberto, meaning to set the Count free, had been pursuing Socarraz, and the guerrilla chieftain, agile, tireless, never leaving his own neighborhood, going to and fro in a territory where he had friends and partizans, was fleeing, always avoiding a fight; he fell upon his victims like a bird of prey, then made good his escape again, roamed through the great plains of Tolima, hid in the mountains, slipped through narrow passes, and by audacious maneuvers, was able, even when hardest beset, to interpose the Magdalena River between himself and Roberto. But at last the latter had succeeded in driving him away from the right shore of the river and taking measures preventing his return there. He had also closed all avenues of escape for him, and since the day before Roberto had been chasing him without a minute's stop, having taken no rest. One single road had been left open for the fugitive,— the high-road where the forces of General Ronderos were in power.

Dolores heard shots coming from the heights, then an increase of firing, and the sound of the shooting came nearer and nearer. Then the fleeing band turned and passed right in front of her, but in disorder and each seeking safety for himself, frantic with fear, panic-struck, throwing arms away, and in desperate mood, crowding in a heap in the small space before the house. Socarraz, distributing his menaces, insults and threats among them, stops, assembles and reunites his soldiers again, and to encourage them he rushes back towards his enemies who are meanwhile coming up from the path below. But suddenly he begins to shriek with rage, totters, and then falls.

“ It's my leg. Damnation! To the dark gap! ”

They put him on a stretcher, and then take to a transverse path, behind the house, when they begin to run with great speed.

Unexpectedly, amidst the clinking of the harnesses, the sounds of clashing steel, and shouts and maledictions, Dolores sets eyes on Maratón and hears at the same time a beloved voice:

“ You go and cover the road to Bogotá! Up that way! ” she hears Roberto shout to some of his men.

“ Over that way I hear shots! ” he goes on. . . .

"Now there is no way out for him, and chance is aiding us. I put the rearguard here. It is two months since the Scorpion is causing me this trouble, but at last I have him bottled up. You're in my hands at last!"

"Roberto!" exclaimed Dolores.

And she rushes at him, with her arms opened wide. She calls a second time to him, but the horsemen, with their leader at their head, at this instant are disappearing on some brambly fields. And simultaneously Montellano comes crawling out of the house on all fours.

"Dolores . . . where are you? Let us flee! That was Escorpión! They will murder us . . . loans . . . ransom . . . we have but two mules left. . . . They will treat us as they did Sánchez de Peñanegra. . . ."

"I believe they are coming back; let us wait."

"Let him come back! . . . We must flee!"

"If it is Roberto, papa, . . . I hear him. . . . They may wound him. . . . We must wait for him!"

The pursuers from up the hillside now began to arrive. An aide of Ronderos offered his services to Montellano and his daughter.

"Let us get out of this . . . quick!" Don Ramón kept shouting. "I have to go to Honda. . . . I would rather stay down there. . . . An escort. . . . They may return."

"In an instant."

They mounted their beasts, took the road, and were lost to view among the trees.

Roberto meanwhile had continued the pursuit of the guerrilla chief, who all this time had kept firing upon his pursuers. The firing ceased.

"Surrender, Escorpión!" shouted Roberto. "You cannot escape this time. Surrender!"

But only silence answered him. They rushed down a declivity, until a precipice halted them. The members of the guerrilla band seemed to have vanished.

It was almost night. This flight, however, appeared inexplicable. The two exits were both watched and the fugitives surrounded. The abyss was yawning down below, frightful, and it opened almost from the very top. And down there, in the darkness, the roar of the water could be clearly heard.

"Nothing again, as always! They evaporate. . . . The earth swallows them up," said Roberto.

With his men Roberto camped for the night at the very verge of the precipice. From time to time the dog started to howl, ran towards the opening in the rock, circled around the abyss, sniffed, searched with great restlessness, leaped to one side or the other, then returned to Roberto, approached him with a low growl, and lay finally down near the bonfire the men had lit.

"What is the matter, Maratón?"

The dog wagged his tail, put his head affectionately between Roberto's knees, closed his eyes and appeared to go to sleep, but suddenly shook his ears, straightened himself, glanced towards the shadow, and in two leaps went back, dived down into the depths, and was lost in the mist below. His howls were heard in the silence of the night, and then he returned to his master to lay his head once more between his knees.

Dawn came; the trumpets saluted the new day with the lively tune of the reveille. Roberto, filled with curiosity, started an investigation, accompanied by his officers. The dog, still restless, went to the cut in the big rock, howled, and returned to his master.

"What is it, Maratón? Search! Search!"

The dog started off with a whimper of pleasure, turned his head, went further, and when at the mouth of the gap in the rock he set up a tremendous barking, a most strident howl, which was echoed by all the surrounding rocks, and when Roberto himself approached the abyss, bending carefully over it, he discovered a broken branch which was still hanging over the void; on the margin he saw numerous tracks, and further below he made out the iron bar of a ladder.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "here we are. There is a ladder. . . . That is how they have escaped us so many times. . . ."

A deep silence reigned while these men, squeezing each other carefully above that abyss, were going down towards what was hiding within the deep darkness of the big rock. Rendered scarcely intelligible by reason of the rushing sound of the river, there came up the scattered words of those below:

"There is nobody here, General," shouted Casanova. "The enemy has fled."

But Roberto placed some good marksmen around in order to

protect the descending party, and told the rest of his troopers to climb down cautiously. That task, an easy one for these guerrilla men used to hard labor of every kind, was rather hard for his men. First they found wild weeds growing in the crevices of the rock, then the bars of a solid ladder, and lower down some holes in the rock made with the pickax, which it was necessary to feel about for with the feet. But they arrived at the bottom at last, where the river took several turns in its bed with a roaring noise, pent up as it was between two cuts of the mountains, and screened by the overhanging forest. A slough in which deep foot tracks were to be seen, indicated clearly in which direction the fugitives had gone. In spots blood marked the deep layers of decayed leaves.

After a rather painful march during which their feet were torn by the thorny bushes, the party arrived at last at a huge dark opening, formed by some sliding of the mountain side. There were two rocks which on top allowed bits of the sky to be seen through the dense cedar branches. The party halted. An overpowering odor of fetid decay seemed to be the sole obstruction. A number of vultures could be seen moving about on the top of the rocks. Their black wings stood out clear against the blue atmosphere, and these birds had their bills turned towards the abyss above them, sniffing the carrion, while others of their number, at the entrance of the cavelike break in the rocks were hobbling about wrangling with each other for the possession of a dead body. A big fire, half dead now, sent up its spirals of smoke, while its sparse flames lit up the rock itself and flickered between the branches of trees. The soldiers, not knowing where the enemy might be in hiding, kept their arms ready for instant use, while the dog began to howl and growl, a token of the near presence of the fugitives. They then rushed towards the great opening along the only visible path, a very narrow one.

They noticed in advancing, in the grove of trees, a number of corpses of prisoners, nailed down on stakes. Passing on farther, they next discovered, further back in the hole in the rock, where the stone formed a sort of roof, and a wide natural cave was visible — what had evidently been the storage house of the band of guerrilleros. There were piled up in orderly fashion pyramids of bales of goods, heaps of merchandise, boxes of liquors, all in separate bulk, and silkstuffs, velvets, cloths, fine

jewelry. Near by there were broken valises, objects of daily use, such as shirts, shoes, pocket books. . . .

Roberto chanced to find among this heap a leather valise lined with canvas, and read on the card attached to it: "Comte Bellegarde, Cabin."

"He has perished. . . . Where shall I look for him?" And he thought with horror of the vultures and the corpses seen in the robbers' stronghold.

He advanced toward the mouth of the cave, followed by Casanova. He grasped a large stone and threw it towards the interior. There was a flash at the very end of the cave, a shot was heard, and then a shout. The whole detachment of soldiers rushed up, believing that their leader had been wounded, but he was unhurt. Casanova, however, who had been behind him, had received a bullet in the arm.

"Go to the rear, boys," shouted Roberto.

He made them retire some distance. They brought lights, and then they advanced with caution, holding their rifles ready. In the back of the cave there were two human beings, both of them lying on the ground. The soldiers drew near. They found them to be Socarraz, who was still grasping his revolver, and Bellegarde, who attempted to rise. Roberto knelt down at the side of the Count, and was filled with terror at the sight of his cadaverous countenance, his air of indescribable sorrow and wretchedness.

Some of the soldiers had disarmed Socarraz who, mute and grim, rolled his wrathful eyes around, glittering from fever in his flushed face. Roberto turned toward Socarraz.

"How do you feel, my poor Escoprión, under these present circumstances? Have you fever?"

But he kept silent, and only moved his lips with a gesture of bitter scorn.

"Do you want water. . . . I mean, of course, brandy?" added Roberto. "Here you are."

The man drank eagerly, noisily.

"Let us see your wound. . . . Is it the arm? No, the leg."

Roberto cut the linen strips around the wound with his knife: it was a gunshot in the knee. Socarraz at last opened his lips.

"If it were not for that fall down there, Don Roberto," he

said. . . . "And those cowards of mine who ran away as soon as I could no longer lead them. . . . Without that it would be you in my power . . . damnation!"

They hastily bandaged Casanova's injury, and then made stretchers for the two out of branches and twigs tied with tough vines.

"Ah, those wounds," said Roberto. "What a *trouville* for González Mogollón. . . . A general, a colonel, and a count. . . . He would gladly bring us three of his camp beds, his own models, numbered 1234, 1235 and 1236. . . ."

They placed Socarraz on one of these hurriedly constructed stretchers. As they prepared him for the journey, he dropped a card case. Roberto opened it, and the wounded man showed signs of great uneasiness.

"Do not touch that!" he moaned. "These are letters from Encarnación!"

Then he addressed Roberto. "My letters!" he said. "And you can buy these pickings of me, Don Roberto. I shall let you have them cheap," he shouted, as he was carried off. "That grieves me, this matter. . . . I do not care a rap that you now know this hiding place. . . . Now for another hole! . . . It is not necessary for your men to pass along the same way you came. . . . The devil take this cursed leg of mine!"

Roberto now approached the Count, whom he had had laid on a couch on the floor. In the light he could perceive the incredible state in which he was, his emaciation, his deathlike pallor. He saw with sorrow that he was near death.

Bellegarde tendered his hand, long, bony, bloodless, and it fell heavily at his side. Roberto knelt once more at his side, and took the hand, trying to warm it against his breast.

His respiration was scarcely perceptible, and his eyes, those same eyes that had expressed so much will power and confidence, were half closed.

"Roberto," whispered the Count, "I should like to speak to you, alone."

And Roberto, without turning around, made his soldiers retire some distance.

Bellegarde drew a long sigh, and over his noble countenance there passed the shadows of approaching death. He remained silent for a time, but then, after a great effort, he murmured:



"Yes, . . . I want to speak to you of Inés. . . ."

He opened his eyes wide, and in their depths Roberto saw a tear glisten. For an instant a gracious smile lit up his stricken features, and a slight convulsion shook his feeble frame.

In accents hardly audible, drawing a deep breath after every word, as though each came from the bottom of his soul, he muttered:

"Tell her . . . that she was my first love . . . my last love. . . ."

His voice with every syllable became more broken, more halting. Each new effort stifled him. He went on:

"In my portfolio . . . you will find petals of the Castilian roses which . . . I have worn on my heart. . . . Please take these to her . . . they are my last. . . ."

He kept moving his lips, but no more words came. Then he let his great gray eyes linger on Roberto, gazing at him with great tenderness, and saying something which his lips could not frame, and then these same eyes became turbid, veiled, and the light died slowly out of them until death closed them entirely.

Then there was wiped out of his face all expression of pain and depression, and his one-time grave and thoughtful air returned to it. He recovered his seignorial aspect, his feudal appearance, unchangeable. He was again like those great lords of old: carved in marble, who sleep their last sleep upon those grand Gothic tombs.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### THE INHERITANCE

ROBERTO buried his friend in a small village hidden away among the mountains, and then started on his journey to Bogotá. He arrived there at night, and after embracing his mother he went, accompanied by Maratón, to the War Department, with the purpose of giving an account of his share in the last campaign, and to request his retirement from military service for the remainder of the war.

Passing in front of the theater building, he saw a sentinel there who was half-asleep, and at the doorway a number of

soldiers stretched out on the ground, stacks of rifles leaning against the wall, and from the darkness of the stage, in the thick atmosphere of the barracks, there issued the sleepy voices of the sentinels.

“ One! Two! ”

The image of Bellegarde did not leave Roberto's mind for one instant . . . his marble face, that gaze of infinite tenderness. . . . And just then there came to him the memory of that night on which *Werther* was given, during which, his sensibility stirred by the music, he had allowed all those treasures, all the fire of a soul steeped in the passion, the longing for love, to be divined. . . . He had remained to his last hour enveloped in that nostalgia for death of which they had been speaking that evening.

No, not so. Bellegarde had not that craving for death when a life of affection, of useful and ennobling deeds, a life of honor and of fruitful activity was before him. It was the country itself that had this craving, and in scattering through it with full hands the creations of his great intelligence and energy, he had been himself torn along and engulfed in the whirlpool. He had in the end been worsted, defeated, killed in his struggle with barbarism.

At the War Department he met Alejandro, who had intended to meet him that afternoon at the railroad station.

“ I have asked for your promotion to general's rank, ” he said.

“ Ask it for Maratón and for those brave fellows of Ronderos whom I passed on the road by chance. Seriously, though, for Casanova. I have brought a translation of that cipher letter along. I fear that Cardoso will yet take his revenge on us. To-morrow Escorpión is going to arrive here, and I am to see him, in order to get confirmation of my suspicions. ”

“ Have you met Montellano and Dolores yet? ”

“ They have gone, I think, to Honda, haven't they? ”

“ Yes, Montellano went there, just as soon as the Magdalena River was free, in order to take over the Sabanilla Railroad. It is a deal by which he is clearing a matter of three hundred and sixty thousand dollars. He paid a million in paper money for it, which means ten thousand dollars, and it is worth four hundred thousand. ”

“ Montellano is speculating on the war and winning. We

ourselves are speculating on peace and losing. . . . And Dolores?"

"Dolores, according to trustworthy information, will finally marry Alcón, unless you yourself will come to the rescue."

"And Doña Aura?"

"She is writing her novel: *Gold and Swords, or The Matchless Wife.*"

"Matchless can in her case only mean without two husbands at once."

"They say that her ex-husband Montellano is paying her a big pot of money, because he foresees a great triumph for Cardoso."

Just then a very elegantly attired young man whose face was badly pockmarked passed near them in the street.

"Do you recognize him?" asked Alejandro. "It is Villafañe. If you only knew how he came to catch the disease. He had just concluded a formidable contract, one he had long been fishing for. It was for one hundred thousand blankets. These he had got at next to nothing by buying them of the soldiers, the very same blankets the administration of the War Department had previously furnished them. . . . But he was obliged to transfer his work now and then to the hospitals . . . and one of those blankets which had to be examined and mended happened to have belonged to a soldier who had died from small-pox. . . . Vidaurre, after his experiences at Puerto Borja, was sent here to Bogotá on a passport, and is now in town. His 'Social Reason' is forging ahead in first-class shape. They are rapidly acquiring a good-sized fortune with it. They are devoting themselves, at every kind of percentage, to all the monopolies and speculations possible and imaginable."

"What noise is that in the next room?" asked Roberto.

Through the door of the adjoining office where, some time ago, that famous luncheon had been given by Gacharnah, issued queer sounds of rattling chains, whirring wheels, and military commands.

"Ah," answered Alejandro, "it is the General of the bridges and highways."

"General?"

"He has been twice promoted during the time of our absence."

Both friends entered. Karlonoff, dressed up completely in a field uniform: boots, spurs, mantle with hood, Prussian helmet, — was putting a big gun together.

“I am at this precise moment,” explained Karlonoff affably, and directing his remarks to these two most recent arrivals, “at this precise moment,” he repeated, “putting the finishing touches to a number of those long Yamagata cannons, which were ordered at my suggestion, and which I was only able to send to the front since that battle at Puerta Borja. And about that battle, by the way, I’ll have to make some serious observations to you, General. . . . I had taken this cannon apart, and I was just putting it together again, piece by piece.”

After quite a deal of bother and time, Karlonoff managed to finish this task, but some pieces were left over, and these lay on the floor.

“And how about these things?” Alejandro asked, and lifted them up from the floor.

“These are parts left over,” said Karlonoff, with a gesture of disdain.

Another of these cannons was lugged up to him, and he set to taking it to pieces in like manner, strewing the hundred or so different parts of it on the floor, table, etc. Then he began to select from the whole heap certain fragments and managed to reconstruct the whole, excepting, of course, that there were again some of the parts to spare.

“Do you see?” said Karlonoff, not in the least shaken in his equanimity. “These parts are left over, without any doubt. This is undeniably owing to a blunder on the side of the constructor. . . . The Japanese are in the habit of making their errors and oversights. But I am going to correct their errors. . . . I mean to omit from the whole number of guns bought of them all those parts left over as useless and a nuisance. I am going at once to present at Tokio my claim for a patent of invention. The new gun will be called Karlonoff-Yamagata improved.”

An aide-de-camp of the War Minister let Colonel Ávila know that his honor was unable to receive him that night. So Roberto left in company of the dog, and in crossing the antechamber of the Minister they sniffed a most dainty odor. The ministerial door opened at this juncture to give egress to Gacharnah, cheer

ful, fresh, gardenia in the lapel of his coat. His triumphal paunch had grown somewhat in size. It was now perfectly round and had heroic proportions.

"Ah, my dear friend!" he exclaimed, taking hold of Roberto's two hands. "I expect you to-morrow at luncheon time, without fail. I shall have asparagus from Argenteuil, Brie cheese, and real Johannisberg cabinet pudding,—the real thing."

The square in front was deserted, silent and full of shadows, just as it had been that night of the festival; the moon in the west, escorted by huge silver-lined clouds, and sailing on a high sea of luminous color. The electric globes along the façade of the Capitol threw against the black mantle of the night ghostly, glimmering reflections, funereal lights. In rapid twinklings the electric lights deepened or lifted the shadows, brought out clearly, wiped away, or intensified the outlines of the stone pillars, the walls, the broad flight of stairs. . . .

The same stairs where he had in better days seen Bellegarde ascending, gallant, vigorous, confident of himself, to sign the Canalization contract. . . . Of the whole enterprise, now, what was there left? It had all disappeared: the enormous amount of machinery, the dredges, the motors and engines, dikes, plantations, buildings of every description, vessels . . . and, at last, the Count himself. Everything had suffered shipwreck, everything had been consumed, as though swallowed up by the infernal regions. . . .

He bethought him of Inés. He went to her house, and knocked. Dominated by a profound emotion, he was in hopes that they would be at home.

"Aunt Teresa?" . . .

"Yes? All right. Don't tell them. I wish to surprise them."

Seizing the dog by the collar, to prevent his running ahead and announcing his coming, he rapidly ran up the stairs until he came to the landing.

He had to stop here and take breath, for his heart beat painfully. Was it merely the emotion he felt, or was it his complaint become more troublesome because of his hasty ascent?

In the drawing-room he heard piano playing . . . it was Inés, and by one of those intuitions which makes to us known

the presence of a beloved being in drawing near to it, he saw her plainly with her jessamine pallor, her thoughtful and affectionate eyes, . . . she was playing Beethoven's fourth symphony, the one Bellegarde had loved so well, . . . that impassioned melody, that great song of love in which the master spoke a language of divinest origin . . . and not alone that; she had adopted the very style of the Count, she communicated to the instrument his spirit, his sentiment. . . . Roberto listened, surprised and disturbed, to these notes that were impregnated with deep emotion, with intense feeling, with sweetest memories. Suddenly Maratón, infected by the disquietude and the painful surprise of his master, gave a little plaintive howl.

Instantly the piano became silent. The wooden floor in the room creaked. The prisms of the candelabra tinkled, and a light step was heard approaching.

"Roberto! What a shock, what a surprise!" and with a somewhat sweeter inflection: "How happy you make me!"

And she tendered him both her hands, those long, slender hands, hands of a perfect mold, which Roberto had always admired as he would an exquisite work of art, and she put them effusively into his own,—hands that had been bronzed by the sun, and roughened by the campaign. They looked at each other: in her deep eyes Roberto read a story which he anxiously endeavored to decipher. That forehead of snowy white, bathed in melancholy, revealed a secret which might be a refusal or a hope. She closely observed her cousin's face, in which formerly there had been something fugitive and vacillating, now full of determination and firmness, and discovered in his glance that dark light of resolution which death leaves in those who have known how to meet it face to face.

They crossed the room together. Roberto sat down in his usual heavy chair. They both remained silent. The light of a single lamp, veiled by a shade, cast the shadows of the furniture, vases and candelabra on one side, drawing arabesques upon the carpets and tapestries. A soft dusk heightened the effect of all these rich and elegant things, rendering the imagination more vivid, inviting to confidences.

"I arrived only this evening, desiring to surprise you."

Inés responded with an affectionate smile.

With the impression of comfort, of well-being which sur-

rounded him, there began to mingle in his heart all the memories of that house that had had for him nothing but affection, refinement and cheer. For a moment he forgot the painful mission which brought him there. He would have wished that nothing should disturb that delicious feeling of repose which filled his soul, that nothing should break the charm.

"It is singular," said Inés, "how Maratón recollects that passage of Beethoven which saddens him so. The howl which so surprised me, the same as just now, that time when Bellegarde . . ."

Her voice began to tremble, that name hung for a moment on her lips, but she quickly recovered herself.

"When Bellegarde played it here, that first of January, . . . he had only recently arrived."

And these words reminded Roberto at once of that more recent scene: the horrible cave, the stretcher, the corpse which was recovering all its former lordly hauteur, the whole noble appearance of the Count, the dying glance . . . the roses. He remembered his charge, and he saw in its fulfilment a punishment, never suspected before. He felt that that grave and gracious figure, which attracted her, which now fascinated her with a new strength, with an irresistible charm, was going to interpose itself between himself and his cousin.

"You must have news of him," she murmured timidly.

The moment to speak had now arrived, the moment to fulfil that supreme charge, to repeat to Inés that declaration of love which the Count had up to then locked up inexorably within his own soul, and which escaped his lips only with his life.

Roberto divined that Inés would be moved to the depths of her being, that this declaration would remove her from him for ever, that the love of Bellegarde was going to dominate her, to impose itself upon her with full mastery, with majesty, with the sovereignty of death itself.

Inés continued in a sonorous tone, becoming more animated, leveling her dreamy eyes upon her cousin:

"You must know something about him. For, Roberto, as soon as I learned that Bellegarde was Socarraz's prisoner, I knew that you alone would take upon yourself the task of freeing him, and . . . I have never ceased believing that."

"Yes, Inés . . . I was going to speak to you about Bellegarde. I have a message from him for you."

"Yes," she replied, with ill-concealed joy. "Do you know when he will come?"

Then Roberto, in silence, took out the portfolio of the Count, opened it, drew out a few withered petals, handed them to Inés, who read in the attitude of her cousin the awful truth.

Then Roberto began to speak, but for a moment there issued from his throat but a dull groan, a rebellious sob.

Inés rose, drew herself up, while an intense pallor spread over her countenance, and in her eyes might be read bitter grief and lifelong sorrow, whispering:

"Dead?"

Roberto silently gave free vent to his tears. Then, his voice broken by rising sobs, he said:

"He was so good, so generous to me."

She remained standing, in a mute grief, solemn, while Roberto, seated and leaning his head on his hand, told her about the death of his friend. And he repeated to Inés, one by one, his last words. And knowing the harm he thus did himself, yet dominated by a sentiment of generosity and highmindedness, he gave in a lifelike picture all those details of the sad scene, laid stress on the intensity of Bellegarde's passion for her, which had been uppermost with him until his last breath, saying that it robbed death itself of its sting, dwelling on his infinite tenderness, on that last look which had been illuminated by memory of her, showing how her image had been fixed in his soul until the very last instant of his sad life.

Inés fainted, and seemed about to fall, but recovered instantly.

"Permit me, Roberto," she then said humbly, "to withdraw. I must tell my mother."

And she went away with her same light step. But she turned at the door, took those withered petals carefully from the table, and closed the door behind her.

He followed her with his glances, and then in imagination saw her in her own room, kneeling, lost in sorrow, her face bathed in scalding tears. And those tears and sorrows were a cruel martyrdom for him. They filled him with despair, with



bitter anger, they tortured him. A new sentiment, hitherto unknown to him, took hold of him,— the feeling of jealousy, jealousy of the dead, of a memory, of the shadow of a friend.

He had always thought Inés cold, apathetic, incapable of profound feeling, intense passion, or strong love. And it was at that instant, when he had seen evidence of those treasures of affection she hid under an austere demeanor, and when he knew the immense fund of tenderness that her heart possessed, that he had to lose her. Her silent smile had spoken plainly. But it had not been for him. Estimating the magnitude of his own loss, the incomparable value of what he had forsaken, and longing to be the one preferred, even if it should cost his life, he felt a wish to be in Bellegard's place and to sleep his last sleep in the possession of her boundless affection, in a hidden nook up in the mountains.

He heard, however, the short and firm steps of Doña Teresa, who entered a moment later and embraced him stormily, only to start telling him about the annoyances, shocks and nuisances occasioned by the war, her vows made to all the saints in Heaven, made together with Doña Ana for his own safety and for his life, and then to urge him to tell her all about what had happened to him during his campaigns.

"It seems to me hardly possible that it should be you, and no other, that has undertaken and succeeded in so many enterprises and performed so many acts of incomparable heroism. It's dark here," she exclaimed, interrupting her own flow of words, and, after a fit of laughter adding: "But Inés likes the dusk, though I find that a half light is depressing. As for me, I am fond of a bright light."

And she touched the button which communicated with the central chandelier; a wave of strong white light inundated the apartment. The shadows began to tremble and then fled incontinently, started then on the other side, and became fixed there. The folds of satin, dead in the shadow, began to bloom; the gilding on the furniture looked fresh; the light spread, then was absorbed and found a slumbering place in the soft rugs.

And while Doña Teresa, gay and sprightly, went on chatting, he, submitting to his melancholy thoughts, set his gaze roaming about this drawing-room in which the delicate hand of Inés had created this perfect impression of the Empire style, had

succeeded in finding those gradual shadings of green which in artistic variations gently declined or rose until the brilliant coloration of the emerald was attained, and on the other side the deep shade of dry leaves and darkest dark green of pools.

The wandering glance of Roberto discovered, too, one single petal forgotten on the table. It was the same table upon which he had that night so long past left the branch which she had worn on her bosom. It was something humble, sad and insignificant, but Roberto imagined he could discover in the fact the atom rescued from the shipwreck of his love, a trace of his friend, a memorial of that last gaze, the full meaning of which, however, had not so far penetrated him sufficiently. It was, he thought, an expression of gratitude, a message for Inés, the manifestation of an ardent desire, the longing that the vows of Doña Ana would be accomplished, after all.

A door which was opened and closed, some light steps in the corridor which were deadened by the thick carpet, the clinking of the prisms, the frou-frou of a dress, . . . and Inés entered once more. He saw her pallor, and on cheeks and eyes the traces of tears. Doña Teresa retired, and they were once more alone.

Roberto had in front of him an Inés never suspected or known by him before, an Inés transfigured by Love, spiritualized by sufferings. Like a superior nature she was,—at the same time attracting and repelling him, while inspiring him with deep affection and respect, veneration and tenderness. That instant too, he became aware that she had acquired, had inherited from the Count his inscrutable aspect, his expression of cool affability, his lordly and feudal air. He wished to talk, but he felt bashful, silly, and he began to stammer incoherent phrases, awkward words of little bearing, sentences that ended half expressed.

Then sheer desperation began to dominate him, and he felt lost. With an expression of deep pain, with meaningless gestures and mien, he broke into a long lamentation, as though talking to himself, in which he painted the complete failure of his life,—a jumble in which he had lost everything, fortune, love and hope. There began to appear in the face of the girl an expression of commiseration, of sympathy, of vigor; encouraged by this and spurred on by anxiety, Roberto was able to dismiss

his air of humble petitioner, his halting words and stammering phrases; his uncertain expressions converted themselves into an irresistible and eloquent plea. He felt himself impelled toward Inés by the same tastes, by the same conception of life, and by the same bonds of race and family, by the fire of the soul, that strong shock of love which he had observed in herself. By a strong effort, by his impetus, his pledges, he succeeded in conquering that heart, that novel passion, in appropriating to himself those infinite treasures laid bare for another, but whose guardianship remained solely with him.

For he did not vacillate, nor doubt the meaning of that last glance of the Count, who meant to put into his hands the happiness of Inés, and into his heart a spark of that powerful and steadfast love for whose cult he had lived and which robbed death of its tortures and griefs. It was like the heritage of felicity handed over by the dying man; it was like a legacy of happiness.

The Count had been unable to give him a fortune, but he had left him as a legacy something more in consonance with the elevation of his character,— a treasure, a higher and nobler fate.

Inés contemplated her cousin with curiosity, with growing surprise. He also was for her a new man, a stranger, a foreigner who presented himself for trial. The cousin who had always treated her with fraternal affection, unreliable, fickle, voluble, had been altered into a timid, stammering lover and wooer, one who breaks out into desperate lamentations, and next, by some hidden virtue, by some miraculous action, becomes a swain full of resolution and ardor. The shadows of former doubt were dissipated, and faith in the new lover grew. And she also, in a vague sentiment of sadness and hope, in a confusion of melancholy and gratitude, in an undecipherable mixture of bitterness and happiness, fancied that the love of Bellegarde had penetrated the heart of Roberto, and had communicated to it a new identity, a powerful will, an intense life.

And both, amazed, surprised, saw a new dawn glow on the horizon, the distances smiling and bathed in light. A splendor of rebirth like that which had driven away the shadows, had made the gold ornaments flame brightly, and had made shine with new luster the old silken stuffs. And over all, drawing

near them, uniting them, floated the dying glance of Bellegarde, full of gentle tenderness . . . the legacy of bliss.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

## THE STORM

GENERAL BORJA and Colonel Ávila were starting on a trip to the González Mogollón Hospital, a name which had been given to the former Christian Workshops managed by the Sisters of Charity. After climbing a great deal of narrow streets and declivities, in doing which Roberto insisted on frequent halts because of fatigue, they came back to find it situated at the foot of the hill. There was the white clock tower, behind a thick mass of trees. But long before they reached the building, it announced its presence by the strong odors of iodoform, chloroform, carbolic acid, and ether . . . which to them was equivalent to the smell of bodily suffering and final death.

"Ah, poor Casanova!"

"This morning Agüeros told me that he would have to operate on him. His arm will have to go, since gangrene has set in," remarked Roberto, stopping again, in order to catch his breath.

"Did you bring along that famous letter of Cardoso's for the use of Escorpión?"

"Here you have it."

Alejandro was handed a bit of paper, greatly soiled and torn, and full of characters and numbers that seemed incomprehensible. At some places, above the words indicating the key to the cipher, there were others written by Roberto. Those words read:

"Great supply of ammunition . . . plain . . . savannah . . . Águila . . . decisive battle . . . fifteen."

"And what do you make of it?"

"More or less this:

"'I count on a great supply of munition. I am leaving the plain of Casanare via the savannah of Bogotá for the wilderness of Águila. I shall fight a decisive battle, for which I reckon on fifteen thousand men.'"

Alejandro smiled doubtfully.

"I have been able to decipher in part the key to the numbers and letters but not the conventional words which are interpolated. I know that my interpretation is venturesome, even in certain places chimerical. But we are going to the hospital to see whether we shall succeed in making Socarraz or some other guerillero talk and furnish us with some additional words, or else with some revelation that would confirm my translation, my suspicions that the Revolution party means to make a last great effort,—if Cardoso has started from the plains and whether he really intends to push on to the wilderness of Águila. In order to triumph Tubalcain is counting on a powerful element, with a probability of success the other chiefs of the Revolutionary forces could not reckon on."

"And which is that?" asked Alejandro in alarm.

"That he has not Landáburo with him."

"You believe that?"

"Let us go and convince ourselves," answered Roberto, as they came out on the little square in front of the hospital, where the penetrating scents of powerful drugs from the hospital mingled with the smoke of some open-air fires on which cooking was done. The Escorpión had arrived that morning in a very serious condition . . . "but something had to be left to chance . . . to the unforeseen, that much is certain," as they were told.

The sky began to cloud up, and forbidding shadows began to fall on the city.

All over the whole circumference of the horizon a gray curtain was spreading, and this, increasing the falling darkness, now stretched its folds throughout the savannah. Only in the great gap, where the two mountains showed a huge opening, there remained a spot where the azure of the sky and the sunlight were still in evidence, but this was narrowing visibly, inch by inch.

This great curtain of mist was spreading in an easterly direction, and was even now wrapping the summits of the cordillera in its folds, covering the peaks, the approaches to the tops, the rocks, the paths in the blackish green hillsides, the fissures on the mountains, the yellow wastes. Dense fogs now pushed on farther and farther, passed on pushing other fog banks out of the way, attaching themselves here and there to the protruding noses of rock formations, until there remained suspended the

immense curtain of obscurity and moisture from the sky, far off at the gap of the mountains, and within and behind that it was clear that the storm was brewing.

With unceasing tenacity, doubling their peal, the bells within the small hospital tower were dinning, and the two friends felt these strokes on their hearts as though they re-echoed with the fierce cries of pain, the low moans of the wounded and dying on the battlefields.

One burial was just over, and another followed it. On an open bier the grave diggers hastily placed the body, shoving it out of the hospital mortuary, and dragged it quickly to the bier, then crossed the little square and the porch, which served as a lounging spot for convalescents. The length of suffering endured by patients, their handling people struck down by death so constantly, had quenched in these grave diggers the love of humanity, compassion and all sensibility. Without paying the slightest regard to these victims of the war, with an indifference that was brutish, some cripples were playing at fencing with the muleteers,—all amidst savage fits of laughter. Others, who were lingering on the steps of the entrance, were throwing dice, and each time a game was decided, the rude laughter and boasting of the winners were mingled with the curses and blasphemies of the losers. Under that menacing sky, in the half light of late afternoon, it was a most depressing scene, in which ribald laughter, blasphemies and the tolling of the passing bell were all blended with the strong exhalations of the hospital and with the stifling smoke from the bonfires. In that nook the sweeping wave of the war had accumulated all the miserable remnants, as a tempest scatters and turns topsy-turvy all the sorry fragments from a shipwreck on to a lonesome beach.

They entered. The double archway of the patio, formerly so pretty, now stood out in dull gray, the distant storm lending it some of its shadows. The arches and walls were stained in places by the smoke and ashes. Here and there were visible dark splotches, the mark of a bloody hand, drippings from a waterspout, which kept the tint of the walls a dull brownish red, as though smeared over with coagulated blood. Above the doors alternated the letterings of the former asylum with those which González Mogollón had had inscribed for present uses: “Em-

broidery Office," "Smallpox Ward," "Artificial Flowers," "Infectious Fevers," "Weavers' Room," "Amputations."

They crossed the inner court; in the corridors emaciated patients were slowly wandering through the corridors, wearing long cloaks. From between their folds looked out wan faces bound up in cloths or criss-crossed by knife thrusts. From time to time there passed some Sister of Charity among these groups, but she would quickly disappear in the passages, while her medals would tinkle for some brief while after her disappearance. From one of the rooms there issued, sharply cutting the silence, a tenacious, strident, unwearying howl.

Alejandro and Roberto went up the stone stairs, passing the sickrooms, then crossed various corridors and next descended a dark little stair, the steps of which creaked as they were stepped upon. Then they heard a voice say to them, as in former times:

*"Prenez garde, il y a dix marches."*

They turned their heads; it was Sister Visitación.

"Is that you, Señor Alejandro? Señor Roberto? After so long a time . . . you are here?"

And she went down to accompany them.

"We have come to speak to some prisoners," said Roberto. "We thought that we should have to follow the garden to find them."

"The garden, . . . the garden . . ." the Sister said, interrupting him, turning back her eyes and joining her hands in a gesture of pitiful regret. "The garden . . . ah, that is a disaster. . . . It is a pity! Oh, my little miracles! . . . All has been destroyed . . . even my famous Papa Imperator. . . . Only look!" she wailed, while she led them through the garden walks, bare, and betraying innumerable tracks of soldiers. . . . "Only look . . . there remains nothing, nothing!"

"Oh, but there is something left," jested Roberto. "See here!" and he picked from the ground some small yellowish strips of paper.

And he deciphered them with difficulty.

*". . . Trifolium frugiferum. . . Spercula arvensis. . ."*

In a nook Roberto heard a shrill burst of laughter, and he approached with surprise. It was the spectral figure of Sister San Bernardo, as though carved from a block of ice. All around her had died: the balmy blossoms in the garden, the

thickets of greenery, the lilies and roses, and she alone remained in the midst of this disaster; only in the brain of the poor demented Sister had the breath of the great destroyer done no mischief.

They returned to look for those wounded men they wished to question, and walked through several more darkened and cheerless corridors. The fog that had by now enwrapped the hills entirely, cast its cloak of darkness over the whole edifice. A flash of lightning was followed instantly by a deafening thunderclap, and this was repeated again, while the echo went rumbling and wandering through the whole range of mountains. Then a shower of hail fell, and next a squall of thick raindrops, which redoubled its fury up on the roofs, whipped the walls, inundated the patios, invaded the whole building and in an instant formed torrents of rain that were running in every direction.

"Sister," queried Roberto, "where are those wounded from the fight at the Dark Gap?"

They entered a room the windows of which had just been closed to shut out the gusts of rain from the squall.

"There are wounded and sick here from several engagements. I believe that yonder," said the Sister, and she pointed to the left-hand rows of beds, "over in that corner, quite at the farthest end of the hall, there is one from that attack which Señor Roberto led, from what I have understood."

They made their way between the two rows of beds, and got to the last, and there saw a muffled-up patient, with legs drawn up, and his hands clasped tightly in front of him. He had laid his head on his knees, and thence it rolled off every little while. The man was a skeleton loosely covered with a yellow skin, the very image of misery, prostration and mortal indifference.

"You were at the fight of the Dark Gap?" asked Roberto in a gentle voice.

The sick man did not move.

"He has been rendered hard of hearing by the quinine," suggested Roberto.

He repeated his question three times, speaking louder and louder.

But his silence continued; only the incessant howling from



the adjoining hall went on. Alejandro interrogated the man in his turn, and shook him by the shoulder. The patient raised his head, slowly, making a great effort to do so, as though it were a head of lead, turned his face, half opened his eyelids, gazed vaguely about him, and let his head drop on his knees once more.

"It is Perucho!" shouted Roberto. "He recognizes me, don't you, Perucho?" and he stroked his neck with his hand, feeling the small bones standing out there.

"Perucho! Look, Perucho!" shouted Roberto. "Do you feel better? Can you hear me? Don't you remember us? We have not seen you for some time, not since Escorpión caught you, and took you away from our side at the attack on Palmares. . . . What have they done to you? Listen, Perucho, raise your head, man! See here, there are some reales for you. As you do not open your hand, I am leaving these notes of paper money for you behind your pillows. Perucho, do you hear me or not? . . ."

The man made another effort, raised his head once more, opened his eyelids, and looked about him with the same vacuity, let his eyes rest for an instant on Alejandro and Roberto, tried to think, tried to remember, moved his lips, and let his white gums be seen, made a strong effort to articulate something, and then, closing his eyes, heavily dropped his head at last.

"Perucho!" said Roberto in a strong and commanding voice. "Tell us! Is it not true that they went to the wilderness? What did you hear Socarraz say about that? . . . Yes, yes, the wilderness? . . . A great battle? . . . Is it not so? . . . They went to join some other forces? . . . They were going to receive munitions, lots of munitions? Do you agree to that? . . . Now, come, remember, man, talk, tell us about it!"

He lifted the head of the young fellow, turned his face, made him open his eyes, and Alejandro finally felt a deep compassion for him. Ah, those mouselike eyes of his in former times, so lively and shining, that had always been talking, full of roguery and animation,—they were now nothing but two yellow globules, heavy and listless. . . . But Perucho seemed to wake up again, showed an expression of fear, then he broke out in stupid laughter, twisted his mouth, and next, assembling his scattered ideas, and gathering all his will power, he stammered

some syllables (once he pronounced "paramo," then "parami," i. e., wilderness), with a faint breath, without any inflection or emphasis, and then, exhausted, his forehead covered with sticky sweat, he let his head again drop over his knees.

"It is useless, Señor Alejandro," said the Sister; "thus he passes his days and nights, . . . silent, without will power, without saying a word. He scarcely takes a few drops of broth, *le pauvre enfant*."

"Stop," exclaimed Alejandro. "Bring us a glassful, or even but a mouthful, of sherry, . . . let us see whether that won't give his body a bit of blood, and to that empty head a ray of sense, of memory or thought. . . ."

And when the Sister returned, Roberto poured some drops of the wine into a large spoon.

"Listen, Perucho, open your mouth, really, you will like it. . . . It is wine . . . . take it!"

The young fellow instinctively swallowed two ladlefuls, and some moments afterwards a slight flush of red began to color his cheekbones. He opened his eyes, in which a remnant of thought began to shine. He opened his hands, which were dry and yellow, and with his fingers he stupidly felt for his head.

"Are you beginning to think? Do you manage to remember things?" asked Alejandro anxiously. "Perucho, you are still the same as before. Do you recall *El Sauzal*, the races, la Alondra, the campaign? Don't you know the time when you won the race on Petronio?"

He put his head in his hands, drew his legs back, and sat up, while his expression of insensibility changed for a moment to an intelligent smile. It looked as though this wreck of eighteen years of age went back in his thoughts to his younger days, as there came to him the recollection of that gust of air that played with his hair and swept him almost out of the saddle when he was on the back of Petronio galloping among the great mass of people who were shouting and huzzahing to him as the victor in the race.

"Yes, yes, Perucho . . . long life to him. . . . Petronio, the track, the race . . . hurrah for him!" he yowled.

He turned his head toward Alejandro, spread out his hands, opened his lips. The sweat was rolling down his temples; he closed his eyes, then he shriveled up again, and once more let

his head drop in the same old attitude of an Egyptian mummy.

"No use," said Roberto; "let us play our last card now, . . . let us go and see Socarraz."

"Escorpión? Do you think so?" said Alejandro, in bad humor.

"Let us try."

Once more they passed through the same immense halls and wards, crowded with sick and wounded, who were placed along the floor in interminable rows, on soiled mattresses filled with straw or rush, or bare bricks. In these closely shut-up rooms the germs of gangrene were spread; open wounds, fever and festering sores bred death. Over all floated the sickening odor of disinfectants.

They saw heads almost bereft of human semblance, wrapped thickly in gauze,—foreheads tightly enclosed in bandages.

Some of these patients, eyes and cheeks glowing with fever, with short breath and respiration irregular, were stirring their arms and legs, unable to find a comfortable posture, pushed on by desperate restlessness. Others again, in a sleep of prostration, suffering from fantastic nightmares, were murmuring incoherent phrases, emitted pitiful cries, complained of their sufferings. When they awoke, they would cast affrighted looks all about them, and then would succumb once more.

One particular patient, whose face was purple, was strangling, and filled his ward with the bellowing sound of a deep cough that seemed to rend his chest. When he inhaled air, it whistled in the caverns of his chest.

Another, with his mouth down, of a spectral pallor, let the blood run into a basin as it issued out of his nose. He had a permanent and incurable succession of hemorrhages that were slowly killing him.

In all these emaciated faces, withered, bloodless, and of ashen hue, could be read resignation to an inexorable fatality, depression without a shadow of hope, debility and supreme helplessness, the habit of suffering without hope.

They pushed open a closed lateral door, and found themselves in a small hall in which the evaporating ether was poisoning the atmosphere: an odor that asphyxiated and produced fainting and vomiting fits. Behind, against the walls, there were rows of dishes with water, with a brown liquid, and on

the floor pails, pitchers with boiling water. At the foot of the window, upon a table, were spread out nickel-plated instruments of steel, wearing a sinister gleam, twisted in form, cold, awe-inspiring, of strange shapes, some like spiders, like scorpions, like poisonous wild beasts, like instruments of torture.

In the center of this room, naked, his face covered by a silly mask, his chest convulsed and in violent commotion, shaken by a short and rapid groaning, was Casanova. And close to this unconscious body, to this inert mass, with nude arms, and hands blood-besmeared, Doctor Agüeros was amputating the gangrened arm. The surgeon, surrounded by his adjutants, was working in silence, in perfect calm, priding himself on his undeniable cold-bloodedness, without having lost his amiable mien, or his disembarassed and elegant appearance and manners, his scientific smile of exquisite courtliness. From time to time the operating surgeon, without in the least exciting himself, issued some brief order, or made an observation, cracked a joke, and then would once more wrap himself in his former silence, interrupted only by the anguished snore of Casanova. And during the operation itself the three heads, the ruddy face of Agüeros, and the two black heads of his assistants, moving about the same radius, bending down over the same central point, drew nearer or went farther away, rose or bowed down, separated and then returned to join each other once more.

Both friends left the operation room, and crossing more and still more sickchambers, discovered at last in a small apartment the bed in which Socarraz lay. At the head of it the figure of Dr. Miranda was noticeable, and at the foot, nursing the wounded man, Sister San Ligorio, who, hearing the steps of the two arrivals, raised her head. Fever, fatigue, night vigils had played havoc with her. The constant contemplation of afflictions that could not be cured, of pains without relief, had served only to accentuate her expression of benevolence and sweetness. Her blue eyes in those hollow sockets above the wan cheeks had become larger. Alejandro, observing her further physical decline, could not suppress a movement of anguish and painful surprise. A smile then began to show in that pale countenance, and she glanced at Alejandro with those eyes of inexpressible charm, turning them to Heaven. At that moment she seemed to have left the earth and to follow the intimate conversation of a

beloved being invisible to terrestrial eyes. A sparkle from another world shone for a moment from her cadaverous face.

Socarraz, lying on his back, with arms flung wide, eyes inflamed and face deeply flushed, showing rage and spite, was turned towards the window.

"Let nobody touch me," he shouted, brushing the Sister roughly aside. "What they want is to make a cripple so that I shall no longer be able to fight against these corrupt scoundrels."

"No, sir, this is only to save you," said an assistant surgeon, "but you have hampered the amputation which ought to be made. The initial fever and the high temperature show that septicemia has spread."

Doctor Miranda approached the two friends:

"He is lost," he told them in a low voice. "It is a terrible case of infection, and the fever has already stepped in. He would not allow them to cut off his leg."

"Really? The wound did not seem to be so grave at first. . . . We have urgent need to talk with him."

"Do not think of it," answered Doctor Miranda, while he twirled the silver snuff box between his nimble fingers. "I have to profit by the last flicker of reason to induce him to confess."

The washing was done. The assistants withdrew. The Sister picked up the cloths and sponges, and as though to force herself to silence, she went to the farthest end of the sickroom.

The shadows crept into the chamber. There was a flash of lightning, followed by a tremendous clap of thunder. The tempest that had moved on now returned.

Doctor Miranda signaled them to withdraw. He bent down afresh to the sick man, and murmured some words.

"I, repent? . . . I? . . . Damnation!"

"See here, Escorpión!" said the priest in a voice of authority and affection. "You must know that you are going to die. More still: you have but a few hours to live. . . . It is not certain that you do not believe. I know you well. There is a God who will chastise you if you do not repent. But the same God wishes to pardon you, the same who died for you. . . . Gaze at him on this cross. . . ."

The dying man did gaze at the crucifix which Doctor Mi-

randa held out to him, then wrinkled his eyebrows, turned his face to the window, and burst into a great fit of laughter.

"No, this is not God; it is a piece of wood. Oh, yes, yes, I, repent? Repent of what? . . . I have not done evil to anybody. I have killed, of course, but only in self-defense. And I have not robbed any one of a centavo. Nothing of that stuff, Doctor! Try to catch somebody else with your nonsense. . . . You cannot do anything with me. . . . Everything finishes with here below. . . . If there were a God, it would be a wicked kind of God, who took pleasure in the unhappiness of his creatures, an unjust God, one who gives to some wealth and pleasant position in life, and leaves to others misery and hard labor. . . . No, I won't have anything to do with such a God."

"You will have nothing to do with God?" murmured the priest in a low voice which, however, soon became fiery. "But that does not depend on you. It is not within your will or your hands, unhappy man. From the day on which you received your being, you were united with Him by tight bonds, by powerful and unbreakable bonds. Those bonds are such as tie father to son, creature to creator. No, He is not the God of the Rich, for them he found no other words but words of reproach, hard and severe words, anathemas. He is the God of the small and humble, of the oppressed. Blessed are the poor, those who are hungry and thirsty, those who weep, says He who was born and who died naked, ennobling and exalting human misery with His teachings and His example, who underwent insult and injustice, and who went the noble and ample way to prepare you for the glory to come.

"My son," continued the good priest, "open your heart to love and repentance, break the shackles of pride, and that same God whom you spurn will lift you to a world where the poor reign, where there are neither great nor little, and no greater hierarchy than that of the humble. If you reject God in this last instance of compassion, and do not listen to your Redeemer and Father, you will then see Him, at the beginning of all eternity, face to face, with His arms raised up, but He will then not receive you lovingly, but will cast you into the infernal regions, where envy, jealousy, wrath, which here below have already poisoned your existence, will also reign, and you will contemplate from the abode of the damned the bliss everlasting

of the chosen. . . . Escipión! Is it not true that you repent, that you acknowledge and love God?"

"No!" shouted Socarraz.

And he sat down on the bed, with his inflamed eyes, with his teeth bared, showing new strength, as though the steel springs of his body had been renewed. A flash of lightning lit up the room, and the thunder rolled through the mountains.

Socarraz threw the bedclothes on his couch aside. He drew himself straight, displaying his crimson shirt, and smiled in a savage manner.

"Ah, ah," he muttered, "it is the vanguard of Tubalcain! Long life to him . . . the fifteen thousand men . . . they are carrying new rifles, . . . they have cannons, . . . a supply of munitions, boys, a big supply. . . ."

And he waved his arms in the air.

"Do you hear," said Roberto to Alejandro, "about the fifteen thousand men? Do you still doubt?"

And full of anxiety they approached the bed of Socarraz.

"No, my friends," said Doctor Miranda, with a solemn mien. "The soul, the soul, before everything else."

The two retired again.

"Abandon those thoughts," urged the priest, passing his hand over the hot, dry forehead of the sick man. "Hear me: if you do not love God, fear at least His justice, eternity, the never-ending penance, hell, infinite pain."

"All fairy tales!" shrieked the other, as though waking up. "I am not afraid of the devil." And he collected himself, got up on his feet, emitted a great shout, and supporting himself on both hands, rose, with excruciable pain, on his wounded leg.

Silence reigned. The gusts of the wind whipped the rain drops against the window panes. Rising above the turmoil of the squall there still came from the adjoining room the same persistent howling, which mingled with the echo of the thunder.

Doctor Miranda lifted his hands to his neck, drew his scapulary out, and put it in the hand of Socarraz.

"What . . . what is this?" asked the dying man.

"It is my scapulary, friend . . . leave it there. Nobody who has it on his bosom will be damned." Socarraz seemed to calm down, glanced to one side, and then to the other, spread out his arms. The priest believed he was saved.

"Friend!"

"What is it? Oh, yes," said the other, his face expressing pleasure, and his voice growing more weak and stammering, "ah, yes, I see them, I see them, but the fog does not let me see very plainly. . . . Damnation! Cursed fog. . . . Is the wilderness of Águila always closed to them? But here they are coming. . . . Punctual! . . . General Cardoso, here I am with my people. Let me shake your hand!"

And he stretched out his hand at random to take that of the priest.

"Who is this other one? That one who is coming there with those other men? Through the Farallones Islands. . . . If perhaps I do not see them, do not see them, then I will remain blind. . . . It is the snowfall. . . . Now I see him! . . . Long live General Landáburo! . . . Let us embrace. . . ."

And he advanced his arm to put it around the neck of Doctor Miranda.

"But how cold it is, General, in this cursed wilderness. . . . My feet are frozen. Bring me my cloak, orderly. . . . I feel the cold already creeping up my knees. . . . Now I feel it as high as my belt. . . . General Landáburo, let us take a stiff drink. . . . Now I can see nothing at all," continued Socarraz, passing his hand over his eyes. . . . "General Landáburo, what is this? Is it the fog of the wilderness? . . . It is an easy thing, when on the march, to take this height. . . . Let us go for them there. . . . Although they seem to hide in the fog. Damnation! Higher up, boys! . . . What a tremendous hill to climb! . . . I am strangled, but higher up. . . ."

And one could hear his effort to breathe. His breathing became stertorous. His throat rattled.

"It means death," said Alejandro.

"It is the end of all," added Roberto, anxiously. "I feel as if I myself were suffocating."

The Scorpion had dropped on his back. His arms lay flat against his body. He turned his face to one side and the other. An attack of suffocation seized him. Doctor Miranda put his arm around his shoulder, helped him up, moistened his lips, and wiped his forehead, which was covered with clammy perspiration.

"Escipión, do you hear me? Have you your senses about



you? Never mind those delusions. You are not in action, you are here, on the point of death. You have but a breath of life left . . . and your eternal fate is to be decided."

Socarraz, who had again dropped his head, suddenly raised himself, opened his glassy eyes which looked without seeing, and in which a frightful emptiness was to be noticed. He gazed all around him. Then it seemed that he struggled to give himself account of his situation. He extended his hand, which Doctor Miranda took and pressed affectionately.

"Socarraz, give me a sign . . . that will be enough. Do you repent?"

"Who is it?" asked Socarraz. "Ah, yes. It is the priest, the black bird!"

He drew some air into his lungs.

"Away with you, vulture!" he then shouted. "There is no one dying here as yet."

With a nervous, repelling gesture he threw himself near the edge of the bed, while he muttered incoherent phrases.

The hurricane was now completely unchained. Rain gusts pounded against the walls. The strong wind whistled in the chinks of the windows, shrieked lugubriously in the corridors of the building, roared and tore at the trees in the garden outside, and shook the doors with a frightful noise. A livid light suddenly filled the dormitory, and painted the faces of the patients a greenish hue. The latter crawled out of their beds, and with cries of fear threw themselves at the foot of the crucifix. A terrific flash of lightning shook the whole edifice to its foundations, with a tearing sound as though everything had been crushed to powder.

Socarraz raised himself once more, took breath, with a strange guttural noise, and before collapsing forever, he shouted with unexpected vigor:

"How well the cannons work! . . . They are already retreating! . . . Let us take them prisoner! . . . We win the battle! . . . Long live the Revolution! . . . Cursed be my soul!"

## CHAPTER XXXIX

## UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

MAKING use of old maps and plans, of geological samples and verbal information, the General of bridges and highways made out a detailed plan of the region which, according to Roberto, was menaced by Cardoso, without there being missing a single stone, nor even a tree. But in these said plans there was no mention whatever of either that famous gap in the mountains nor of the wilderness of Águila. But then, he said, there was no danger threatening from that side. A few words in cipher and the delirious drivelings of a dying man were not sufficient reason for preparing a difficult campaign, nor for summoning the different divisions of the army which for the most part were at the coast or in the Tolima plains. But, just when nobody expected it in the least, news came to Bogotá that Cardoso was marching rapidly with a considerable army towards the capital, coming by way of the wilderness.

General Ronderos, only partially recovered from his physical ailments, started in great haste with the only forces there were in Bogotá, met Cardoso in the wilderness, at a point called Pan de Azucar (Sugar Loaf), one day's march from the Capital, defeated him and forced him to withdraw to the Wilderness of Águila, whence he had come. But once there, in the formidable positions of Cabrera, and by way of the Gap of Águila maintaining his communications with the prairie country, from which he constantly drew his required provisions, Cardoso fortified himself, beating back the attacks of the brave soldiers of Ronderos.

The panic and the disheartenment of the Government and its friends which set in with the appearance of Cardoso and with the subsequent inability of Ronderos' troops to take the enemy trenches, were extraordinary. Doña Aura ordered a banquet to be made ready at the Bicontinental in order to receive her triumphant husband in worthy fashion. Soon there was talk of commissioners of peace, of compromises, of politico-military conventions. The big voice of González Mogollón made itself heard those days with much bustle and deafening tenacity. And he kept up a ceaseless journey between the government

palace and the house of Doña Aura by coach and auto, González conferring with her as to the bases of understanding for a general peace by agreement, which the spouse of the poetess would have to confirm later. Alcón had a moment of supreme happiness. For he considered himself the arbiter of the situation, and he believed he would be able to flaunt the striped ribbon across his chest by attending skilfully to these arrangements, that "reevaluation of ideals" of which Landáburu had been speaking.

But contrary opinions prevailed, overcoming "good" feeling; bursts of resolution and energy succeeded fear. The imminence of the peril brought out resources, raised armies, fired enthusiasms, and restored the weakened will power of the friends of the Government. Alejandro, who retained his post as chief of staff of the army of Ronderos, stayed on in Bogotá to hasten the departure of the various divisions. One morning, with a steady rain pouring down, he was watching the embarkation of those troops with whom he was to start himself. The Grenadiers, with their immense brigade and their long Yamagata-100 guns, arrived, ready to depart. The *élite* troop silently occupied their train in perfect order. Producing a tremendous echo within the surrounding tall edifices, the drums of the Milan Gil battalion, hoarse and out of tune from the constant rainy weather, resounded nevertheless with great force. The battalion owed its new name to the mysterious disappearance of its former commander. The flag, which was thoroughly soaked with rain, now showed near its point two black ribbons that fell mournfully down the length of the staff. With music, shouting and a cheerful noise the Palmares division next presented itself, under the lead of its second commander, because the first one, Casanova, was still at the hospital. But suddenly a detachment of invalids, emaciated and pale, came marching out of the mouth of a side street. There came Casanova, with his sword carried in his left hand. The right sleeve, proclaiming the loss of his limb, hung down his thin body.

"General," he said, addressing himself to Alejandro, and in a voice still rather feeble, "these boys will not fight without me. Now that, thanks to you, they have made me a general, I have to show my little stars."

Bells are ringing. The first stroke is for attention. The

engine whistles again and again. Then, with creaking of chains, the train begins to run slowly. The raindrops slapped against the panes. The train bell gave forth melancholy notes that were scattered throughout the deserted country side.

"Do you hear?" said Roberto. "It is the funeral knell tolling for all those unfortunates who are carried off to the slaughter."

A short distance after their start they saw on one side the race-course. The center of the wide space was covered with wild grass and weeds; the track itself had sunk, the grandstand and boxes had become ruins. When they had passed on a little farther Roberto made out, in the thick, milky air, a country house by the way,—that of Bellegarde.

"It is a year ago that the unfortunate man was talking to us, at Ubaque, of his impending journey. He did not know then what journey he was soon to start on."

Here and there, along the route, they noticed on a number of houses the English flag or the Italian flag, and on the walls flaming inscriptions: "English Property, Gacharnah Brothers"—"Italian Property, Fratelli Malatesta."

"Rhadares and the commission merchant," said Roberto, "are successfully cultivating the branch of foreign reclamations. Each chicken taken from those foreign pieces of property for the use of the army, they make the Government pay for as though it were the Phoenix itself. And when the honied voice of the reclamationists is not heeded at once, their guns begin to speak."

They had to wait for detachments of recently enrolled recruits. These came accompanied by their wives, sisters and mothers. The poor fellows had to march between a double row of soldiers. They all brought food along in large baskets, especially fowl of various kinds. All their faces revealed deep distress, resignation or else a brutish indifference, the air of him who is accustomed to suffer, and submits without resistance to the inevitable.

From amongst the women who remained in the road there came sobs, and half suppressed moans. After the recruits had entered the train and the engine began to move, there was a general outburst of complaints and tears. Some distance away Roberto, full of compassion for these poor people, heard the weeping of an old woman, who had stopped in the middle of the road, erect, grave, allowing tears to run down all over her fretted

cheeks. The bell, as the train pulled out of the station, went on ringing steadily, and it continued as long as the road lay through the plains. But at last the train set up a piercing whistling, the brakes creaked, and the engine stopped. The trumpets sounded, and the troops aboard got out.

The rain ceased, but the marching path was thoroughly soaked, and the soldiers marched along in mire. From afar came the thundering noise of the torrents rushing along through the bamboo jungles on the hills.

The Sisters of Charity marched along, accompanied by Doctor Miranda. Seeing Sister San Ligorio among them, Alejandro was convinced that only a miracle of will power, a miracle of divine love, could enable her to remain on her feet and resist all the privations and hardships of a campaign like this: such were her pallor and physical exhaustion. She seemed a spirit already freed from its mortal coil. Alejandro bowed his head, filled with respect and veneration. And she directed another of those strange glances at him,—grave and affectionate at the same time,—by which she seemed to invite him to listen to the secret voice that called in his heart, to devote his life to penitence, to take the road of the cross marked by herself,—the road to Heaven.

On a horse covered with foam and utterly exhausted, his flanks rising and falling from exertion, an adjutant of General Ronderos who came direct from his camp, presented himself.

In Pan de Azucar there had been most determined fighting. Cardoso, dislodged from one place, was defending his new quarters palm tree by palm tree, and had erected fortifications in La Cabrera, where he was enlarging his army with those guerilleros whose bands had been defeated before and who were now flocking to him. But there were also daily partizans of Cardoso arriving from Bogotá. After several times being beaten back by Cardoso's men entrenched in strong positions, Ronderos did not intend to make new attacks until he should have received sufficient reinforcements from Bogotá. His army lacked everything: munitions, food, and shelter. Many perished from hunger and cold. The wilderness was infested by guerrilla forces who interfered greatly with communications. That night, therefore, the new reinforcements were to camp at Pan de Azucar, and the day following the Grenadiers were to

proceed thither in aid of Ronderos, since their guns were absolutely needed for the destruction of the mud walls and houses at La Cabrera. Roberto was to stay in Pan de Azucar, in order to direct and guard the reinforcements, the munition trains and the provisions, and also to cover the march of the rearguard.

"The General has also charged me," concluded the adjutant, "to show you this letter, taken from a postal messenger of the enemy who fell into our hands. The letter is from General Landáburu to his friend and confidant Vidaurre."

The letter read as follows:

"Nobody can attribute any of the disasters that the revolutionary party has met with to me. They are due to the criminal inactivity, the deep enviousness, and the low ambition of Polanco, to the rapacity of Socarraz, the imbecility of Nerón Jaspe, the cowardice of Largacha, to the stupidity and laziness of Nichols; the latter being, however, nothing compared to those of Tubalcain Cardoso, he having declared himself chief of the Revaluation party and director of the war. He is ill-fitted for that post, who lives shivering in those wildernesses day and night, who has no constancy for anything except his plunder, and who for that sole reason will be up watching all night. He is a cipher, spelling that word with a big C, unable to plan anything, and incapable of executing it when conceived. He is chaste and pure, that one also, fond of low-lived singers and of smutty stories. His greatest vice, however, is his habit of taking snuff, which is a vice of the Jesuits. To his craving for rule and his incapacity the defeat of La Chorrera was due; but that defeat was an advantage to the country, because success in that battle would have meant the presidency of Cardoso, which would have been something like the government and presidency of Ravachol in France.

"How much more preferable are the vicious chiefs, when they know how to win victories, to those masquerade-heroes who play the ascetics. Many believe—and I belong to their number—that the failure of the Revaluation movement is not so much due to the inability of its chiefs, but rather to their excessive virtues. Our Bogotá friends must know what type of man this Cardoso is. Many compare him to Bazaine. They should know, too, the shout of my soldiers when, gallant and proud, I stride in front of them in my white uniform, on my war horse. A wave of enthusiasm runs through them at such a moment. For one I have a smile, for another a word of encouragement, and for them all the prestige of glory and valor. And then the sublime shout will rend the air: 'Long life to our leader Landáburu! . . . Look at this, my brave boys! . . . Where our general puts his foot nobody else can find room!' But nothing of all this gives me pleasure. In fact, I am indifferent to it. Worse, it humiliates me, it outrages me, it ages me, the idea, I mean, that a Tubalcain Cardoso should be preferred to me. And it is for that reason that I consider myself expelled and proscribed by the Revaluation Party, pursued by invidious suspicions and calumnies. Of all parties

either known or yet to be known it is the one harboring the lowest kinds of passions, the most ignoble instincts, the most nefarious and the most villainous purposes. I turn my back on it and abjure herewith a cause which rewards its heroes and defenders as this one does.

"Indeed, I am thinking of establishing myself in foreign parts and founding a commission house. You who have such a talent for business, will be glad to get me a goodly number of customers. I trust it will be one from the ranks of the Constitutionalists, because customers from the ranks of the Revaluation party do not inspire me with confidence.

"The house of Gacharnah Brothers must have an account in my favor, the remainder of the last coffee they exported, which may be paid in gold, and one from the bill of exchange which was bought at Calamar. As the remittances, the letters and the account are in your own name, it is necessary that you let friend Gacharnah know discreetly about all this, so he will not forget it.

"Since my exile I see the triumph of my ideas everywhere, because ideas do not die, do not change, do not spend themselves, and do not grow old; in the end they always conquer. Against them bullets do not prevail, nor chains or instruments of torture, nor jails. That which martyrdom could not achieve, has been obtained by indifference, a smile, disdain, a shrug of the shoulders, old boy.

"I am speaking, for instance, of my ideas of peace, because the use of arms, of violence, of any illegal means whatsoever, is the language and the clearest sign of our barbarism, of unreason and of injustice.

"War is a crime! And to those who might tell me that these have not always been my convictions I shall answer, amongst other things, by means of my speeches at *El Consuelo* and at the Bicontinental which represent my definite and free confession of faith as my patriotic conscience dictates it.

"To these eloquent words I want to add to-day those which follow, in order to support with my authority as a revolutionist those of another American equally famous as a man of peace. 'We have lost the way,' said George Washington. We must suppose that the convolutions and the silences of privileged brains, of the highest type of intellect, of the great characters who have ever arrived at the summit of their ideals, will never be understood by mere negation, dulness and scheming. From that greatest height, therefore, I return as the enemy of all slaughter, of all revolution, and the friend and apostle of peace and evolution.

"After all, I have abjured but one single letter: R.

"F. LANDÁBURO."

"Praised be God!" exclaimed Roberto. "We have in the person of friend Landáburo the scatterer of armies, the most powerful ally. But it is necessary to get him moving. . . . Let us see . . . Casanova . . . a man of intelligence, a postal messenger . . . send this autograph letter to Cardoso . . . here we can keep a copy of it."

"It would be better to consider this a little . . . to foresee . . ."

"No, no! We will foresee nothing. You know that I profess the religion of chance. It is needful to let things come as they will. . . . Only God knows what will yet happen! Let us go on! Onwards! . . . Let us only hurry on through the recesses of the wilderness."

They mounted their horses, placed advance posts, and started on their road in silence. The trot of the horses sounded hollow, and there was a depressing monotony among the pools of stagnant water and the muddy roads.

"How are those paths of the wilderness really going to be?" suggested Doctor Miranda, riding at Alejandro's side. Alejandro was given up to his thoughts, still under the profound and wholesome emotion which Sister San Ligorio had kindled in his soul.

They followed the vehicles in a silence which was broken only by the clanking of the harness and the champing of the horses, and they advanced at a great rate, although the implacable rain whipped their faces and wetted their clothes thoroughly. On one side there were the fogs of the mountains, on the other the prairie country, which lay under a mist of uniform gray. Within the circle which the horizon described, there were visible blackish masses of trees, or else the white outlines of some hut or house. Along the steep paths trickled thin rills of water downwards; the soil looked black, the rocks, the gullies shining with rain. Some cattle, grazing on the moist grassy slope, showed fear on the approach of the riders. The alder trees let their branches droop, like moistened plumage. For short intervals the rain ceased, and then the atmosphere became bright and clear; the colors of everything stood out brilliantly, and the foliage showed a vivid green; the hillsides brightened too, until a new shower poured down, and then the whole scene changed once more, and the air turned thick and murky. In the center of the wide plain the smoke of one small hut rose, tried to rise straight, then flattened out and lost itself in the dusky surroundings.

"Roberto," said Alejandro at last, breaking in on the long silence, "you vainly attempt to hide from me your annoyance and your bitter temper. You have reason to feel that way, I



admit. What more do you want? I have not forgotten that you were in Curaçao, that you have faced the dangers of the sea, tempests and great fires. You have covered a thousand leagues, and have not yet come to the end of your journey. It is as though you were borne along by an inexorable fatality. Let us submit, without grumbling, to our fate. We were born for peace and for the finer appreciation of intelligence. Our real destiny, as poor Bellegarde used to say, should have been art. And yet we are forced to live in constant sight of violence, midst filth and mud, amidst the brutalities of war. We are, in a word, Colombians. I also know," he went on, altering his tone, "not through you, from the laughter of Aunt Teresa and the tears of Aunt Ana, that the great desire of both of them is going at last to be fulfilled. And despite your bad fortune you are going to be happy yet, because our happiness is not bound up in this fortune. But I am waiting for our speedy return, and then . . . you will grant me a nook in your house."

Along the whole length of the road, as far as eye could reach, the marching battalions could be made out in the murky atmosphere. The advance guard was already gasping up the steep rise of ground, and could be seen on its tortuous path, winding upwards in a snake-like coil.

The priest and the two friends were making their way along the right-hand side, now climbing up a thorny crest, and their horses found difficulty in their upward toil over the chalky soil. The strong wind blowing down from the range, lashed and tore at the manes of the horses and whistled in the ears of the travelers. Then again the downpour ceased, and they left the path and began to penetrate into an immensity of huge rocks, which rose like so many skeletons. Alejandro threw his glance toward the summit, searching something, and saw far in advance, between the marching battalions, appearing and disappearing in the turns of the road, the white hoods of the Sisters of Charity.

"They are the ermine," said Doctor Miranda, divining Alejandro's reflections, "which no muddy roads, of which you spoke but a moment ago, can soil,— the white relief amidst the shadows, gentleness and sweetness amidst utmost brutality, generosity amidst egotism,— the holocaust, the sacrifice, asking pardon for so much blood poured out needlessly."

They crossed a break in the mountain path, and began to climb down between rocks over a deep path, the bed of a torrent. Then they entered a different territory: gullies without any vegetation whatever, in which the stone showed ruddy tints,—slopes which seemed like backs bared to the storm.

The horses had to descend long, slippery and difficult paths. When they finally reached the bottom, they had to begin the climb up another hill.

After a rough ascent they found themselves on the top of a brow covered with large flat stones, through which they made their way along a twisted narrow path, between brambles and thorns. The noise of an invisible torrent accompanied them, and the noise grew as they went down farther, owing to the rains. Now the noise increases, and a dark whirlpool comes in sight. There is an immense bowl of stone, and out of it the water is escaping and inundating the path, whence it again escapes in cascades, only to pour down into a profound cavern. A group of ferns rears its trembling leaves above it all.

They were still ascending. Then they turned into a dark and narrow path densely covered with thistles, tall reeds and ferns, the spongy soil below grew thorns and blackberry bushes. Onwards they went between bushes misshapen and half withered, their branches covered with gray mosses and silvery scales, from which water was dripping from the recent rain. This vegetation, which the glacial winds never allowed to flourish, struggling along on an arid and sapless soil, was hostile to man, and was covered with thorns, sharp spines, and needle-like hooks.

Thus they arrived on a high crest. The small summit was cleft and scarcely allowed a foothold. They turned their horses, and with emotion saw far down the boundless prairie, a huge level space which stretched out from one end of the horizon to the other, until at the farthest confines of it hazy fog veiled the view. Divided by great distances, dense masses of trees behind which the small buildings were hidden, showed the spots where small villages were situated. Between the foliage, here and there, some white clock tower would peep out. The silver ribbon of the river, flashing out at some points, could be traced, flowing slowly, as though asleep. Its course was hard to follow with the eye, because it went in curious curves, bending and

describing almost perfect circles, then proceeding again a short distance, only to retrace its path again and again, right across the smooth meadow lands.

Roberto, mute and broken in spirit, indifferent to all, now gave spurs to his horse, turned once more, and diving amidst the ferns and dry plants, stopped at the brink of the canyon. He looked out over the vast plain below, crossed with his thought the intervening space, and there, behind the nebulous and swimming horizon, sought the city, his house, the shelter, the comfort of his home; saw in his mind his beloved mother, with her sad look, which, the last time he had seen her, had only cleared up in a slight smile when she had been told of the silent agreement between the two cousins. The white, dreamy face of Inés, too, came before his eyes. Then, as if torn away from these dreams in spite of himself, he tried to make out along the vanishing line of the range of mountains, far away, the road to Honda, . . . and he felt as though those large black eyes were resting upon him, full of passion and fire.

"What are you thinking of, Roberto?" shouted Alejandro.

"I? Of what? . . ."

He bruskiy tore himself away from his thoughts, and moved his head as if awakening.

"Are you sad? . . . What was it you were thinking of?"

"Well, yes, . . . I felt sad," he said, changing his expression. "Sad because of General Karlonoff's wound. Don't they believe it? A mortal wound."

"Wounded? Poor fellow!" said Doctor Miranda.

"How, wounded?" replied Alejandro. "If he has never been in battle . . . he will never get a bullet in his chest nor profit from the services of Agüeros."

"Yes, wounded. . . . Do you remember how strongly he defended his plan of campaign? Well, we are doing everything exactly contrary. The great tactician is wounded, wounded with a deadly wound, to his self-love."

They all laughed, then took a drink. Then they rode off in the opposite direction, spurred their beasts, and again started on the road towards the wilderness, now near. They left behind the bushes, and came to a new region, more exposed, more desolate, where above the black soil of the slopes only dry weeds could flourish, rosettes resembling handfuls of knives, huge

leaves formed like saws, withered ferns, showing a grayish tint, which under the horses' hoofs gave forth a metallic sound.

They advanced rapidly. But as they advanced the wind became keener and keener, penetrating them to the bone.

The wilderness opened before them with its aspect of desolation, of nakedness, of misery. The mist which rose from the ground, alternately veiled and disclosed the interminable spaces thickly covered with weeds of a sickly yellow, in shape looking like never-ending flocks of sheep. The wind brought from time to time the rushing sound of a torrent which in leaps and cascades roared through the tall cane-brakes with a dull thunder. There came to their ears strains of a saddening harmony which grew or diminished in volume, was gone and again returned.

They arrived at a pile of rocks, whence the torrent escaped, and then they began to descend the slope in the direction of the cascade.

Alejandro strained his sight in search of something: on the opposite side, already on the summit, in a rent of the fog, the outlines of the Sisters were visible for one instant, and then it was swallowed up again in the mysterious opaqueness, amidst white drifts.

They came to the bottom of the cane-brake, and crossed the mountain torrent, whence they began again to ascend. The dense fog completely enwrapped them, forced them to rely on their sense of touch, made them lose their way for moments.

"Alejandro!"

"Roberto!"

"Dear Miranda, are you there?"

Suddenly, up on the height, in the midst of the fog, a shot was heard. Then another, and next a discharge *en masse*. Several balls whistled by, while others struck the rock close at hand.

"Casanova! Borrero!" Alejandro shouted in a voice of thunder, and he dug his spurs into the flanks of his animal, which sprang aside into the fern beds.

"Boys," he shouted again, "what does this mean? Is it an ambush?"

"Ambush, no," replied Roberto, "there is nothing to hide in here. . . . But still, it may be an attack in the wilderness. . . ." and he hastened away in pursuit of the enemy.

Casanova and Borrero likewise went in pursuit, with his men answering the firing, which seemed to come from above. A salvo discharged upon those on the summit sufficed to drive the aggressors away, and their shots now were lost in the distance.

"Doctor Miranda! . . . Where is Doctor Miranda?" shouted an aide who was rushing his mule down the declivity.

"Here I am."

"Quick, come with me, Doctor. Take my mule, up, up! Quick! . . . Above there, on the plain, just at the end of the hillside. . . ."

"Who?"

"Sister San Ligorio. . . ."

"The Sister. . . . Good God! . . . But how? . . . How has this happened? . . . Let us go!"

He climbed the steep slope, arrived at the top, gazed all about him, and discovered some short distance away, swept by the icy winds, a dilapidated house which with its clay walls, its thatched roof, and with its shaky beams looked like a skeleton that had broken through its covering of flesh. At the side of the little house, springing out of the sterile earth, grew a number of rustic lilies. In the patio of the hut, lying on the ground, rigid in death, was Sister San Ligorio, in the arms of Sister Visitación, who held her head in her lap. The eyes were closed, the nose sharp, the lips ashen. Upon the face an expression of placidity and sweetness had fixed itself with radiant immobility, something like a peaceful smile during sleep. A red streak was filtering out of the breast, was running down in front, and was sucked in thirstily by the black powdery soil of the patio. Doctor Miranda knelt down, questioned the other Sister with his look, and began in a low and solemn voice to murmur the prayers for the dying.

"Go forth from this world, thou Christian soul, in the name of God, the omnipotent Father who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who enriched thee with his gifts . . ."

Alejandro, who had been in pursuit of the enemy, now returned.

"Miranda, are you there? . . . It was nothing. A small guerilla band who took to their heels . . ."

He shouted this to the priest from afar.

"Hurry, Sebastian! Night is coming on. . . . But what is the meaning of this? . . . A Sister? . . . Who? . . . Wounded?"

He came forward with his horse, then dismounted and took several steps nearer, fixing his gaze upon the face of the dead. Recognizing her and seeing the blood, the pallor of the face, he was on the point of crying out and falling forward. But he recovered himself, took a step backward, then bared his head, bowed his body, and remained mute.

In the silence there was heard only the murmur of the priest, who continued:

"We give thee back into the hands of Him whose creature thou wert, so that after having undergone the sentence of death pronounced against all men, thou mayest return to thy Creator . . ."

He saw far away a fragment of fog breaking loose from the surrounding mass, which being driven overhead for an instant mingled its white sheen with the snowy white of the corpse, and then passed on afloat over the enormous waste of the wilderness, spreading out an enormous shroud over all.

Alejandro remained standing, mute, transfixed, motionless, a prey to a feeling of stupefaction, surprise and bewilderment. A deep sob shook him for a moment, but he controlled it and hid it in the depths of his bosom. He stretched out his arms, put his hands to his eyes, whence the tears now began to fall, and then sank to his knees.

He was dominated by the startled consciousness of the supernatural. Here, close to him, was being wrought the miracle of the liberation of the soul, and he witnessed the passing away of somebody to whom death was the better part of life. He believed that Berta de Mortemar, in taking the veil, had given him a glance of farewell, a long and strange glance, impregnated with gravity and tenderness, with which she now called him to herself on high. And he felt that his existence was bound by mysterious ties that were not to be broken, to the

memory, the example of a sainted woman. And the mists around him went on weaving a veil of mystery over the whole saddening scene. The breeze that blew amongst the bushes seemed laments, deep-drawn sighs. The voice of the priest, which now and then was tinged with solemn inflexions, again with enthusiasm, with mystic fervor, still continued:

“There issue forth the glorious angels’ choirs to receive thee; the apostles who are to judge thee, go to meet thee with the triumphant host of martyrs. Thou art surrounded by the shining throng of confessors, and thou art welcomed by the radiant chorus of virgins. . . .”

And those words which for the first time came to the ears of Alejandro, fell like balm upon his despairing heart. He imagined he saw the angels on their winged flight through space, carrying off the soul of this saint and bearing her in triumph to a region of light, of eternal bliss, of infinite love . . . a region to which he, too, might follow her, imitating her. . . .

The spell which held him was broken by some diggers who began to use their shovels,—sounds which awakened a painful echo in his grieving soul.

“The grave!”

Then he heard the gentle voice of Sister Visitación:

“Here. Bury her near the house!”

Alejandro rose, looked about him, stared with horror at the brambles shooting up from the ground, at the mean little hut, and then noticed the lilies not far away.

“No,” he then said in a half-strangled voice, “here amongst these lilies.”

They all waited in silence. They stood erect, raised the body, and placed it down in the grave. Doctor Miranda, in a last appeal, with a voice broken by tears, but in which the fervor of his faith was distinguishable, the fiery outburst of his trembling hope, said:

“Lord, into Thy hands I commit and to Thy compassion I leave the soul of Thy handmaiden who, dead to the world, lives in Thee through all eternity.

“May she rest in peace!”

Dead to the world! Thus, yes, thus Alejandro had seen her since she had donned, like a virgin veil, the white hood of the Sister. Dead to the world! But alive in God. For God

had been her longing,—His will and His law,—and this it was that had imprinted upon her countenance the seal of homesickness not curable here below, the sacred repose of hope, and had given to her blue eyes that mysterious light, that unspeakable fascination.

Doctor Miranda, standing near the grave, with his hands raised to Heaven, blessed this last place of repose, and implored as in a final farewell, eternal rest and eternal light for Sister San Ligorio.

“May she rest in peace!”

They were about to throw a last shovelful of earth upon the body below, but Alejandro stopped them, plucked instead an armful of lilies, knelt down, bent over the pit, and then dropped the blooming flowers over neck, bosom, arms and hands of the slumbering dead. Then he gave a sign to the grave diggers, and let the black earth fall upon the snowy linen, forehead, lilies, over that body which not even at that instant lost its peculiar seal of distinction, grandeur, and majesty. Alejandro made next a tall cross out of branches, and imbedded it solidly in the earth at the head of the grave.

“Now let us go,” said Doctor Miranda, “since all has been accomplished.”

And all the others left, heads hanging low, and began to climb a steep hill.

The priest approached his friend, who still lingered near the grave, standing alone, with bare head, and mute.

“Let us go,” he insisted gently, “let us go, Alejandro!”

But he, without turning his head, extended his arm silently, pointed to the road.

The priest went off slowly. On attaining the top of the height, he once more turned his head, and saw Alejandro kneeling, bent over the grave . . . at the foot of the cross. By the movement of his shoulders the priest saw that his friend was shaken by interminable sobs.

They then went into the dense mists as into a floating shroud. But at last, late in the afternoon, the rising wind swept the fog away.

The sun went down. It was a wintry sunset, veiled sometimes by ragged clouds, then the firmament was bathed in light, leaving the wide extent of the landscape in dark shade.



The outlines of the various slopes remain in the east piled one upon another, with long spots of faint purple.

A cold breath runs through the meadows, a shiver presaging the night. The last ray of the sun, piercing the dark brown of the west, draws at random a fillet of light upon the leaden background, and crosses the space covered with vapors, bathing in melancholy mood the summits of the slopes, kissing its rim with a golden shimmer, enlarging the shadow of the cross, which it traces upon the naked earth, and is lost in the depths only to reappear on the next slope, fantastically dilating in the lonesome landscape of the wilderness.

The army continued its march in the light of the moon, and about midnight arrived at Pan de Azucar, only two leagues distant from the camp of Ronderos.

"I must give these poor fellows a bit of food and rest," said Roberto, walking towards a tent in company of Doctor Miranda.

"And to-morrow, or rather to-day," continued the priest, looking at his watch in the light of a camp fire, "we must hear mass."

"Oh, yes," replied Roberto, with a sad smile. "Happy New Year!"

The swift trot of a horse, its snorting audible some distance away, the clanking of spurs, . . . it is Alejandro.

And Roberto read in the brooding expression of the face, the crisis that had come to his friend, the renewal of his being. He read the mystic atavism of the race that was triumphing. He remembered the seal of irrevocable sadness, of saintly resignation which marked the face of his own mother.

He then comprehended with the divining power of affection that Alejandro wished to remain alone with the priest. He therefore left and went to give directions for the field mass with which the New Year was to be greeted.

Soon after, dawn began to throw faint lights upon the wide extent of the wilderness: a half-light that was equally distributed and reposeful, perceivable as though from behind a curtain, coming down to illuminate vaguely the sickly vegetation, the fanlike branches of the huge ferns, the shaggy leaves of the weeds, the handfuls of straw, the icy solitude.

The whole landscape was now softly illuminated. In the zenith the curtain was beginning to part, and the pieces of mist falling in a slow shower towards the soil, were unfolded and broken up in their flight toward the horizon, letting the azure of the upper sky peer through the rents. In the foreground were appearing, in an immense picture, the serried ranks of the battalions. Farther away, the white row of tents appeared, and here and there, pillars of smoke were rising straight in the still air of the early dawn.

The divisions were forming at the foot of a slope, upon which a scaffold had been erected. There an altar, on the right of it a stand of flags, and above them, a great cross made of branches.

At intervals, tall, erect, fringed in gold, the flags. The one of the Milan battalion bore funereal ribbons. The icy wind of dawn shook them. The black ribbons emitted a slight noise as though of fatigue, a dull moan, and again fell along the flagstaff. The sun and the cold, the storms and rains, the air of a hundred combats had taken away the luster of the colors, merged the originally bright hues. But the flags themselves were still there straight and proud, as symbols of faith, of enthusiasm, of indomitable valor.

Upon the altar shone the cover and the white color of the missal whose leaves the wind was fluttering rapidly. On the other side there were visible two smoky fires whose dying flames were trembling in the keen air. The chasuble was folded in straight, rigid folds, and the satin of it crinkled, showing dimly a crown of thorns on the back of the priest that wore it. Standing close by him a soldier had lifted up a huge baldachin crowned by a silver cross.

The mass begins. The military band breaks the silence, with a march that scatters its notes far and wide. The whole army forms but one shadowy patch on the scene. In the immense *ensemble* there are no single faces to be noticed, but merely the total mass, the colossal pile of gleaming bayonets.

At the lifting of the host the little bell sounds feebly, and its tinkling is lost in the wide space. A tremendous roll of the drums in the center is answered by another similar one farther away, and so, from battalion to battalion, like a suc-

cession of echoes, the stirring tune is repeated. Later there mingle with it the clear notes of the trumpets, the chords of martial strains on all instruments together.

The soldiers present arms at a given signal, and as if the territory itself were hiding in sections, suddenly a number of battalions bend down below the level of others, the flags are raised in the morning wind, flutter, and seem to embody the faith of the whole army, prostrate on its knees, for in the hands of the priest is at this moment raised the host.

Dissonant flourishes, martial disharmonies, increase the turmoil with their strident notes, cross and recross, confound each other, and at last melt into one tremendous triumph of sound.

Roberto, who assisted at the mass, broke out in the *confiteor*, and Alejandro came forth from out of the center of the army, and with hands joined passed through the midst of the soldiers, who on seeing their commander, pale, emaciated, consumed by a strange grief, observed him with surprise, with respect, with affection. On arriving at the altar, Alejandro bent low and then prostrated himself. The ministering priest advanced, gave communion to Roberto, and seeing how Alejandro now crowned that conversion for which he had hoped for so long, a sentiment of saintly exultation, of tenderness moved him deeply, stirred him to the innermost heart.

His voice, in presenting the host, became veiled. Alejandro raised his head, sent his gaze, as the evening before, searchingly heavenwards, as though following a track, a path traced up there for him to see. Then he fastened his eyes upon the enormous cross fashioned of branches, and as at that same instant the sun issued piercingly, it appeared to be the cross itself which lighted up with its waves of splendor the whole landscape, as though it spread brilliant rays over the world. That light of dawn, so new and smiling, bathed Alejandro's face, which expressed adoration, sanctified anguish, satisfied love, even love superhuman.

Doctor Miranda could not contain himself any longer, but let his tears run unrestrainedly down his cheeks. A profound emotion, the fever of enthusiasm, the contagion of exaltation ran through the ranks, shook the army from end to end, and deep sobs were heard, singly at first, then multiplying, so that they drowned the words of the officiating priest, who felt

vibrating within him the piety of the priest, the fire of the apostle, the serene affection of the friend.

“The body of our Lord Jesus Christ guard thy soul for eternal life!

## CHAPTER XL

### PAX

“I HAVE this humble auto-apotheosis of yours, General and Doctor Landábuero, which has accidentally fallen into my hands, and which I take the liberty of returning to yours,” said Tubalcain Cardoso, handing him the letter intercepted and restored by Roberto.

Cardoso was a man of feeble physique, nervous, restless, yellow complexioned, with eyes that glowed like live coal. He seemed to be devoured by an inner fire, and frequently made a gesture as though he had swallowed bitter saliva. His features were those of a typical fanatic, of an apostle of destruction, of a furibund demagogue. When he now began to speak, he controlled his irritation with difficulty.

Landábuero was at the time dictating simultaneously to four of his aides, and these, despite the intense cold, managed to lift their voices to the provisional president with whom fate had joined them.

Seeing the attitude of Cardoso, they left the apartment, in order to summon a number of Landábuero's friends, fearing a complete disagreement and, perhaps, a violent scene between the two leaders.

“I can understand, General,” answered Landábuero, without losing his calmness, “that you feel mortified at the conflict of authority that has arisen between us. But all that may be smoothed over. We can have a grand review during which we two might embrace in front of the whole army, and afterwards I might issue a proclamation containing a grand eulogy of yourself. Later, I could name you minister of war, in charge of the office of secretary of finance, so as to entrust to you the management of the public funds. . . . I have learnt

that you have compared my war exactions to those of Francis I and of Cæsar."

"I have indeed compared them with both," said Cardoso, "because after your numberless defeats you might exclaim with the one: 'All is lost save the baggage,' and with Cæsar, 'I came, I saw, and I provisioned myself anew.' And as for your nomination, I decline the honor. Men who have no ideals, nor fixed political belief, who accommodate their principles to circumstances, who have neither faith nor flag, may become useful as heads of commission houses, but not of a cause, nor of an army . . . no, indeed."

As he spoke, giving vent to his wrath, he became calm once more, recovered his serenity; the guerilla chief disappeared, and the philosopher and apostle by conviction came to the surface.

"What if I am an anarchist!" he went on. "Those are my principles, and I have professed them with undying faith for the past forty years. The great French Revolution stopped midway on the road leading to redemption. The Rights of Man remained thus only half developed, without guarantee or protection. I had seen in you, General Landábuero, an efficient collaborator, active and enthusiastic. Your speech at the Bicontinental was for me a revelation, a hope and a counsel, because it made me regard you as my comrade who would help me in the extermination of law-trammeled society, in the fair distribution of all wealth. And let me tell you, General and Doctor, I have not yet lost that hope."

Outside of the shop in which the two chiefs were talking, voices began to be heard: it was a perfect fermentation of sedition and mutiny.

"Death to Landábuero!"

"Death to Cardoso!"

The two went out.

"General," continued Cardoso, dilating his nostrils, "do you not perceive the odor of decay? All over the Republic are bleaching the bones of the soldiers of the Revaluation cause. In this camp there are thousands of dead bodies lying unburied. Do you think these men are to be told now that they have died defending an evolution,—mere theories? That war is a crime? Do you think it possible for a whole country to fling itself into a war, to fight a hundred battles and to drench

the soil with blood simply for an R more or less? Would it be enough to answer them by a smile or by a shrug of the shoulder?

"In this letter, General," added Cardoso, snatching that paper from the hands of Landáburu, and waving it in the air, "you claim, and it is the truth, that martyrdom does not extirpate ideas. But that which those who have sacrificed their lives cannot accomplish, is accomplished by the termination of the system of the closed door, and the introduction of 'evolution' and the 'open door.' And this is your definite credo?"

And he broke out in a fit of noisy, sarcastic laughter, full of scorn and provocation, in which he gave full vent to his spleen.

In the camp the agitation was increasing. The friends of the two leaders were ready to kill each other.

Landáburu, who felt the support of his partizans, exclaimed with his voice of the parade field, changing from aggressor to victim:

"Comrades, friends, this man ruins my faith in virtue, because he has an abnormal conscience. . . . Between us two no tribunal whatsoever must decide, but the opinion of the whole of Spanish America, if not the tribunal of The Hague."

Cardoso listened to him with his bitter smile. Some of Landáburu's friends now came up, then he lifted his voice, made his famous circular gesture, and continued in his trumpet voice:

"I am no anonymous person. I bear a name illustrious in science, literature, politics and military knowledge. My ideas have been defined in my proclamation of Calamar. Those brief but eloquent sentences are a program, my firm belief, spontaneous and definite.

"The revolution represents the only sort of legitimacy, the only right really possible and admissible in this free country. A curse on him who would speak of reconciliation, of peace, of disarming and compromises."

"And then, to furnish the most striking proof of my adhesion to those principles, I am going to offer once more my life, to sacrifice myself for Revaluation. I am going to play at ducks and drakes with my existence, in order that after such

service nobody may reproach me. Gentlemen aides," he wound up, "please let all the detachments know at once that I am going to head a general charge upon the enemy, desperate, but decisive. Soldiers, we are going to change History itself. Long life to the Revolution!"

"That is an absurdity!" exclaimed Cardoso. "I command here. I am constantly receiving reenforcement and munitions. Within a few days I shall be able to duplicate the fighting strength of the army, roll up the enemy, march upon Bogotá, which is bared of all forces. Ronderos is admirably fortified, and if we are repulsed, the repulse will change into a defeat and disaster."

But Landáburo heard him no longer. He had arrayed himself in full glory of battle, and on horseback, followed by his aides, in heroic attitude, he was riding up and down the ranks. Soon along the whole battle front the cry could be heard: "To the charge! To the charge!"

Meanwhile Borrero and Alejandro had started with the Grenadiers after the mass was over. Roberto and the rest of the army had remained at Pan de Azucar, where a week previous the first hostile meeting had taken place, a most bitterly waged fight—between Ronderos and Cardoso, the latter retiring to La Cabrera, not, however, without contesting every foot of the ground with his opponent.

Innumerable bodies lay unburied on the field, mutely bearing witness, as they lay thus in heaps, to the horrible long duel in which the combatants met, fought, retired only to advance again, recovering and losing the same point many times.

An icy wind whistled with gloomy persistence in the ears of the troops who had in front of them a succession of slopes, like an immobile wave of earth; upon these slopes could clearly be distinguished the dead, resembling white or red stones in the distance.

Flocks of vultures, drawn from incredible distance by the strong scent of decomposition, were obscuring the sun, and in their never-varying migration to and fro crossed the wide space like clouds of a tempest, covering the soil with a cloak of black, filling space with their horrible croakings. They kept on sniffing the air busily for long distances, lost themselves along the many declivities, the ravines, the cane-brakes, the

gullies, and after their banquet, when replete with their horrible diet, gathered in interminable rows, opened their wings to the sun, while more and more of them were still arriving in dark masses from all the points of the horizon, descending, scattering, sating themselves with the fat meal, never able to get enough of the splendid feast of human flesh. Far away, in the depths of a steep, narrow valley, an arm is being moved to and fro, a cloth waved for appeal, a pitiful cry for help unavailingly heard.

Doctor Miranda dismounted, begged Alejandro to proceed on the march, and finally started on his way alone, at the bottom of the ravine. The vultures retired, croaking horribly, and then returned to their prey. Swarms of horrible flies assailed the good priest, and a thick and deadly vapor shut him in from all sides.

But the priest, overcoming all his repugnance and facing all the dangers, went on nevertheless, looking at corpses that had lost their skin and who in strange and forced positions exhibited the network of their nerves, the shapeless mass of muscles lying bare; greenish faces, livid,—the mouth full of bleeding clots, the eye sockets empty; he saw human countenances which in the process of decomposition,—delicious morsels for these dreadful birds of prey,—had been transformed into horrible fragments of putrescent flesh and fiber. With the relaxation of muscles and sinews and nerves even those dead bodies left unmutilated had assumed horrible expressions, some exhibiting an affrighted air, others an even more ghastly appearance of laughter or ribaldry, of a paroxysm of grief.

Finally the priest arrived at the bottom of the ravine. There he saw another fearful picture. Surrounded by greedy vultures that had picked their eyes, there lay a young and once comely mother, with a small and half devoured child, both in a state of advanced decomposition, the little child with its mouth still at the maternal bosom whence it had formerly drawn its nourishment. The strong wind that was blowing stirred the white cloth that had covered up the even whiter bosom of the poor mother, and her beautiful chestnut hair was fluttering in the gust.

And Doctor Miranda, his heart deeply touched, saw in his mind all the successive stages that had preceded death for



these two: the dread of this fate that had overtaken the mother in the end; the wailing and whimpering of the little creature whom its only protectress was herself powerless to help; the slow starvation, the mortal terror, the approach of these scavengers of war and death, the final yielding to their assaults, the agony, the bitterness of the end, drop by drop, of their awful fate. He thought he could still hear the last cries of despair, the last farewell, the last desperate attempts at escape and the last gaze around for a merciful hand, for assistance from the one who probably himself meanwhile lay a bleeding corpse not far away. He had himself been the comrade, the friend, confidant and confessor of those men of whom many had scarcely retained any human resemblance. But though his heart was heavy within him, he told himself that he must not abandon them, that he must pray and weep for them; before his eyes passed at that moment the memory of so many anxieties and almost superhuman sufferings, and it seemed to him that to console and encourage these poor beings was beyond his strength.

Like a huge picture the whole campaign appeared before his inner consciousness, its bloody scenes, its interminable marches, its sleepless nights, the hunger and thirst by which these men had so often been tortured, the conflagrations, the heat and cold and rain, the wounds and disfigurements, the fever and feebleness, the mud and slime and blood . . . and from the depths of his soul he sent a fervent plea to Heaven, a plea for the eternal repose of the dead. And for the living, a speedy peace.

And in the midst of his prayer, there came to his ears, skilled in distinguishing the turbulent noise of combat, the echo, at first faint, but quite distinct afterwards, of a battle; he turned hurriedly in the direction where a new slaughter was shortly to fill the field with the bitterness, the death rattle, the groans and the tears of struggle. He hastened once more where death called him with iron voice. The turmoil went on increasing rapidly, and he mounted his beast and quickened his pace.

And as he advanced along a painful path, still strewn with the fallen of previous fights, new pictures of pity, of violence, of horror and pain appeared before his vision.

Out of miserable huts made of branches and besmeared with mud, there issued forth men half nude, half starved, covered with horrible pustules from a deadly, a contagious disease.

A woman who held the head of a dying man; soldiers in whose face could be read lack of sleep, exhaustion and fatigue, and who were warming themselves at a fire. Others he saw who were fighting wildly for a morsel of rotten meat. Farther away there was an old man who was seated with his head held between his hands, weeping bitterly. Then there advanced along the road a man in rags, nothing but skin and bones, who made faces and contortions, danced, broke out in bursts of silly laughter . . . a crazy soldier. On his approach there fled and hid men and women of sinister aspect, who were interrupted in their task of searching the dead, in robbing them, in despoiling them even of their last stitch of bloodstained, torn and soiled clothing.

Then he came across field surgeons working in the open. . . . The blood was flowing, mosquitoes and flies were buzzing thickly. On the soil are glittering all those instruments of torture. The surgeons, bent over their bloody task, cutting through the flesh, laying bare the bones, sawing through them, manipulating the entrails without paying the slightest attention to the cries of pain from their patients, themselves indifferent, impassible.

As the priest advanced farther and farther, the roar of the battle became more distinct, a ceaseless roar and explosion, and yonder, at the bottom of the deep depression, still hidden by the slope, issued as from a furnace, ruddy flames, pillars of smoke, an incessant thunder which the echo repeated from hill to hill, being thus prolonged through the whole mountain range, like the rumblings in the interior of the earth that announce and accompany volcanic eruptions.

In a word, he saw in one immense panorama, the total extent of the battle scene. In front of him was the enemy; in the center, upon a height, the houses of La Cabrera. Yonder was the army of General Ronderos. And between the two contending forces there was a deep ravine. From place to place, through the immense smoke clouds which were spread over the entire battlefield like a bluish mist, could be seen the masses of the revolutionary battalions, who were by now

separated from the fortifications, hiding amongst the rocks, later reappearing on the plains. The chain of trenches of the Government forces — square upon square — was afire from point to point, like a rivulet of burning powder. It was one sole flash of fire, one sole streak of lightning, one sole thunder, making the region tremble, from the soil of the earth to the height of the firmament.

Still Doctor Miranda went on, got to the brink of the battle line, crossed through the ranks, scorned the bullets which whistled all about him, sometimes emitting whining or moaning sounds. Still proceeding, he went over the whole extent of the camp, because amid the shouts of the combatants, the sharp reports of the rifle fire, and clatter of the machine guns, the blatant notes of the bands, and the tunes of the trumpets, he was still able to distinguish the groans, murmured plaints and sighs of the dying. And these voices which in his heart outweighed those of the tumultuous battle itself, seemed to plead with him imperiously, tortured him, and his soul began to overflow anew with bitterness, and the immense mass of sufferings exhaled by these unfortunate thousands weighed down his mind.

*“Vocem terroris audivimus, formido et non est pax.”*

“General Borrero,” the commanding general had said, indicating with his fleshless hand a point in the affray, “advance with your battalion as far as that height over there, fronting the houses of La Cabrera. Destroy them with your guns, and likewise every building in the vicinity, and the mud walls and fortifications. That’s all.”

Then with a gesture that meant to hide his anxiety, he stroked his mustache and his jaw, and then went back passing along his lines, thus infusing, by his mere presence, indomitable courage in his soldiers,—electrifying the whole army.

Under a rain of bullets Borrero occupied his new position, had his guns placed and adjusted (they were the famous long 100 Karlonoff-Yamagata of improved type), and got his batteries ready for action. In the midst of the general combat the army anxiously kept gazing at the Grenadiers and their new guns of “improved” pattern. For there the decisive blow was to be given. They would dominate the most important position of the enemy, would make a breach in his ranks that

not alone would dislocate his whole forces, but would at the same time open passage to the army of the Government.

“ Fire! ”

The ten noisy mouths of the “ improved ” type of gun burst forth with one tremendous report. But Borrero noticed with alarm that in the report itself there had been something flat, weak, abnormal.

The houses he had aimed at were untouched, intact. Shot upon shot was fired. The result remained the same. Nothing. The projectiles fell at the distance of a few yards. The “ reformed Karlonoff ” could achieve nothing.

The enemy in front broke out into fits of ironic laughter. Cardoso (for Landáburo, his purpose of displaying himself for a moment accomplished, had disappeared), stood erect in the trench:

“ Machetes! Let us take the guns! ” he cried.

And he headed the attack upon the cannons with two thousand picked men. The famous guns fired shot upon shot, just as rapidly as they could be loaded, but the evident uselessness of these cannons only served to fire the assailing force with high courage.

The battalion which up to this moment had regarded these famous guns as their comrades, as endowed with pluck and heroism, as something which gave to their own souls something of the strength and toughness of the bronze the guns were forged out of, on beholding them so useless, were filled with despair. The ranks of Borrero's men began to break, the soldiers turned around, stumbling against each other. Suddenly Tubalcain Cardoso could be observed pointing his sword, with a gesture of victory, at the batteries before him.

Borrero, however, made up his mind to save these guns or to perish with them. He had his trumpeter blow the signal: Fall back upon the reserves! And the soldiers, hearing this signal which regulates their movements and takes the place of waning will power, with disciplined movements, mechanically, automatically, fell back a few paces, and then grouped themselves anew around the flag, aligned themselves, become once more an organized troop.

The cheerful and vibrant accents of their own chief, hearten them still more.

"My brave boys," he cries, "not a single shot. Let us receive them at the point of the bayonet, which we know how to wield. . . . We are again in serried ranks, and we have always beaten them before. We are going to beat them now."

After a strident clinking the short and wide glittering steel weapon has been attached to the rifles, and the soldiers, acting on command of their officers, throw themselves on guard, right foot behind, the body leaning forwards, the arms stretched out and the bayonet lowered. Pushing, half frightened and puzzled, the machete men meanwhile have reached the spot. But the serene attitude of the battalion which they had believed defeated in advance, stops them.

They are two thousand black, ferocious savages, half naked, exhibiting their oddly white teeth with the gesticulations of orang outangs, and brandishing with wild frenzy, above their yellow caps, the flashing, broad blades of their machetes. The first row of them is advancing now, and is launching itself upon the battalion. Silently the machetes do their bloody work, circle about the skulls of their foe, about their necks,—fearful slashes; in a flashing and scintillating figure the formidable weapons inflict deadly wounds, twist and turn, searching out without rest or favor the unguarded spot in the other men's armor, furiously glittering in their fiendish bloody task, points always bare, reddened with the life fluid of their victims. But always the machete encounters the vigilant bayonet, steel against steel, the point of the bayonet penetrating the other's guard, and vainly they attack, tire out the destructive attack of the machete, until at last the Grenadiers, like so many streaks of lightning, pierce the close ranks of the macheteros, nail them with the sharp points of their broad weapon reddened to the hilt.

"Now for the guns!" comes the voice of Borrero shrilly.

A flash, a thunderous noise, a thick smoke cloud. Amongst the cohorts of negroes there are now openings, but these close up again speedily. The battle is becoming a general scuffle, a fierce struggle man to man, an infernal spectacle in which the cannons themselves, a hundred times taken and a hundred times recovered, are surrounded by rows of dead and wounded. The whole scene, in fact, is now a strange medley of noises,

made up of the reports of shots, the clatter of steel upon steel, the creaking of axle-trees, the clinking of chains and harness, the ring of bronze, the scuffle of men on the ground locked in each other's arms intent upon murder, the tottering of wounded, and all enclosed in an atmosphere reeking with sweat and blood, with frightful blasphemies and curses, while the fighters themselves battle with fire and steel, shoot and kill at but a distance of inches, are drawn into single combats, mingle their plaints and their breaths, bite, scratch, strangle each other.

The failure of the cannon, the temporary retreat of the Grenadiers, the personal presence of Cardoso, at the head of the macheteros, his valorous charge, aroused a blind enthusiasm within the army of the revolutionists; this spread to the trenches, and led there to a wild fight. A panic seized the ranks of the Government troops.

Defeat, at this critical moment of the gigantic duel, spread through the heated, vibrant air hovered with its back wings first above one and then the other army, scenting its prey and ready to fall upon the victim with a bound, with a swift sweep, like a flash.

Tormented by restlessness, Roberto, from his camp, heard the increasing thunder of battle, the sinister bellowing which in the clear air was more and more distinctly audible from far away, in these wilderness spaces of Águila. The reserve was waiting from minute to minute, arms ready for marching, when some panic-stricken soldiers arrived from the battlefield itself.

"They have defeated the Grenadiers, and are taking our artillery." Such was their report.

Casanova, with a kind of speechless wrath, halted in front of Roberto. They gazed at each other without saying a word. Roberto made an affirmative sign. Then was heard the signal for marching. The battalions left speedily, saluting the coming combat with acclamation.

"It is the decisive battle," said Roberto to Casanova, with whom he was galloping at the head of the troops. "Do you hear the signal to charge along the whole line? Ronderos was thinking of leaving us behind here, thus preserving a safe line of retreat in case of defeat, but this attack now has come unexpectedly, which means that it should have been expected.

We are coming now without orders. . . . We must win . . . else our act is inexcusable. . . . Victory or death . . . do not forget that! . . .”

Roberto was as pale as death. His eyes showed deep hollows, and he had an acute pain in his chest. His voice sounded broken and was lost in an attack of weariness.

“Colonel, what ails you?”

“Nothing, nothing. This will pass away,” he continued, biting his lips with anguish, and raising one of his hands to his chest. “This will go away. We must make the final charge upon them, Casanova. . . . All the divisions at once . . . one single sweep without halting . . . profiting from the impetus. . . . The Palmares Division must be in the center. . . .”

Casanova saw with affright that Robert grasped the mane of his horse with trembling fingers, that he allowed his head to droop, that he was barely able to keep in the saddle, and that he was that instant fainting, his arms hanging down inert.

He sprang forward, succeeded in seizing the horse, and managed to receive Roberto in his one arm before the latter glided unconscious to the ground.

Roberto did not recover his senses for some time, then opened his eyes and made an attempt to rise.

Clearly and distinctly the roar of battle reached them now, more and more vividly, more and more inciting. It was a vast sound composed of a thousand individual sounds: the sound of brass, the sound of man in its most exciting note, in the manifestation of the martial spirit.

Roberto's own men came on like a joyous hurricane, drunk with enthusiasm, fascinated by the shouts of combat, electrified by the prospect of victory.

With a supreme effort Roberto succeeded in mounting his horse again, as he intended to put himself at the head of his brave men, who were wild to go to the assistance of their old general and offer him their lives at the moment of supreme danger. But he was unable to do so. Prostrated by acute pain he once more fell, fainting. He opened his eyes, saw Casanova, who remained at his side, saw in him the despair of inaction, the irresistible longing to join in the fight, the mad desire to head the charge, to jump into the trenches, to defeat the enemy, to scatter his strength, destroy him; in short, to conquer.

"Leave me here," Roberto whispered, "aside here, this will pass quickly. . . . I shall follow you. . . . Make haste, haste . . . over there!"

He pointed with his hand towards where the combat was raging. He was even able to force himself to make a gesture of farewell to Casanova, who at once rushed off, and then Roberto fell back in another spell. He half awoke, and heard the dull noise of the marching troops, the hoofbeats of the horses, the ring of steel.

Then Casanova, it seemed to him, returned, with gestures of great anxiety. "Good God," he said, "defeated?" . . . "I have returned in flight," he thought he heard Casanova mutter, "at the head of the last remaining columns. My horse turned at the front, took the bit between his teeth, while I was signaling to the enemy with my sword, motioning desperately with the stump of my arm, like a broken wing, in a convulsive movement."

He awoke again fully. The rumble of the last companies was disappearing in the distance.

The wind coming and going brought the thunder of battle closer or carried it off far away. In an interval of silence Roberto heard on the road the song of sutler women:

Death is sweet if it comes  
Surprising me at thy side,  
Thy hands in mine,  
Thy lips on mine.

But oh! how sad when it comes  
In a lonesome nook,  
Without thine eyes on mine,  
Without thy lips touching mine.

Ah! The folk song of Ubaque, Joy, the festival! Dolores! . . .

He felt in the back of his neck, in his spine, the wet and cold ever so keenly. A penetrating, implacable cold. Before his eyes the sky spread out clear and transparent, with the same limpid blue which it wore that afternoon at Ubaque, . . . and that other afternoon when, with his mother and Inés, he was strolling so happy through the meadows at *El Sauzal*.



The battle waxed grimmer and grimmer, became more and more heated. Roberto divined the mysterious current, the heroic impetus which inflamed and carried the two armies onwards. He felt the destroying hurricane, the irresistible impulse of the charge, the tumult of death, the prelude to the victory on his side. . . .

Now the noises were diminishing and beginning to disappear in the distance, the noise and bustle of battle . . . and later still, the icy wind of twilight brought to his ears the sounds of trumpets, clear, vivid, and proud, which proclaimed victory.

The clatter of approaching horses is heard, the jingle of bridles and arms . . . some horsemen are passing near by. He means to beg their assistance. They observe him, burst into a roisterous guffaw, and with brutal voice and in the language of drunkards exclaim before riding on their way:

“Hidden in the straw field, have you, chief? Are you sick or merely afraid?”

Afraid? Yes, he began to think himself that at the moment of entering the battle he had been prevented by a sudden spell of cowardice,—that an irresistible panic had made him sick, that he had deserted his post.

Roberto made a supreme effort, struggled, succeeded in rising, . . . fell again heavily, . . . then fatigue overcame him, his breath failed him, and he was again tortured by a sharp pain in the chest.

Was this death, then?

Sometime it had to be. But not here, not in this solitude, in this cold, in this . . . and his mother, far away, abandoned, alone, in poverty . . . thinking of him, awaiting his arrival day and night, her eyes fixed, glued to the sketch in which Alejandro had represented him dead. To die? Yes, but only after embracing her, after giving her a last kiss, a last farewell embrace.

The presentiment of death took hold of him. He saw it coming pitilessly, like a sovereign, domineeringly. He wished to receive death with his whole mind, regard it face to face, not as somebody who hides and flees from it, but rather as one who throws himself resolutely into his arms, who fulfils an irrevocable decree, resigns his own will to the will of God,

and gives his life back to God as he would give back his sword.

He was able to put his hand to his neck, drew out the crucifix which his mother had handed him, and placed it with a last effort to his lips.

He confessed at the bottom of his heart his belief in Jesus Christ, the faith held by his ancestors, in which the Avilas had lived and died for generations and generations. He repeated the words which he had professed in the morning after the communion:

“Soul of Christ, sanctify me! Body of Christ, save me!”

Then he took farewell of life, and bidding a last adieu to all he had loved on earth, awaited death.

Dizziness overcame him once more . . . was it already death? . . . He took leave a second time. His heart, as though it wanted to break his chest, was hammering away with terrific shocks, increasing its palpitations a hundredfold.

There were running through his mind scenes and landscapes filled with light and enchantment: *El Consuelo*, the infinite horizon, the plains without end. . . . Dolores . . . her big black eyes . . . the house, the garden, the gushing waters, the shower of roses that was falling like a bridal veil. . . .

Then the drawing room in Empire style arranged by the delicate hand of Inés, the comfort there, the delicious half-light, the love which had enwrapped them, filling his mother with happiness.

Life invited him, was smiling at him, desired to keep him here . . . but the shining heaven on high was filling everything below with mist and darkness, and in the thick shadows those cheerful landscapes of a moment ago went to pieces, and with them those charming scenes, life itself. . . . The earth was becoming mute . . . everything was sinking into a silence of eternity . . . he no longer felt the damp of the soil, nor the cold and frost, nor did he perceive any longer the hammer beats of his mad heart . . . it was going now more and more slowly, until it would stop altogether. His existence now withdrew entirely into his thought, his brain.

In the midst of the impenetrable obscurity enfolding him now, two shining faces were calling to him: his father, . . . his sister Elisa . . . but they also passed, wiped out by the black

shadow. All was now dissolving, submerged in this darkness without form or limits into which he, too, was swallowed up, in which he floated, lightly, without weight, drawn more and more by the beckoning distance. There remained but one single face now . . . the face bearing the seal of unaltered sadness, with a crown of snow white hair. . . .

"Mother, dear little mother, farewell!" The pale face came closer, caressingly touched his own cheek with hers, brushed his forehead with her lips. . . .

The light of dawn tore the dark mists asunder: "Jesus! Jesus!" . . .

Roberto stirred, stretched out stiffly; the last rattle died in his throat, but a smile illuminated his countenance. . . .

The army of Ronderos camped for the night in the tents of the enemy. Pursuit had been unchained upon those who were lions in the morning and now miserable fugitives, seized with terror, disseminated and dispersed, hunted without respite, and knifed without pity in the woods and crags of the wilderness.

Night fell like a merciful mantle which suspended the frightful killing and hid the horrors of the combat. But in a short while the moon lifted this veil of mercy once more, and solemn and dolorous, its pale silver light bathed everything in melancholy and sorrow, throwing an icy gloom upon the battlefield. This field which in the morning had been so crowded with life and movement, with vivid noises and outbursts of vigor and power, was now a field of mourning, a field of death, where ruled prostration and paralysis, where corpses lay piled up high, and where the dying were trying to hide their agony within the pitiless soil that itself was drenched in blood; where in the most tremendous of all disharmonies rose a sole clamor, a sole cry; interminable moans, piercing howls, roars of fright, voices of terror, prayers and appeals:

*Vocem terroris audivimus, formido et non est pax!*

Battlefield, field of horror, field of death which the tireless priest, with his cassock torn to pieces and stained with blood, is ceaselessly visiting. He halts, he kneels down, he hears the confession of the dying, rises to go on, continues scattering the balm of compassion and affection. Up on the sum-

mit of a slope he stops, scans with a long gaze the mass of dead and wounded, and hearing the groans of agony that seem to grow ever more gigantic in the stillness of night, groans which seem to form one colossal voice in which cries of pain, cries of fright, invocations and fervent prayers are mingled, sighs:

“Give us peace, oh, Lord!”

He now follows the downward path, down to the bottom of the ravine, and looks up the rocks and the gullies, arriving at the next height. Here he gazes all about him, and his eyes take in a larger radius. He seems to see the territory of the entire Republic covered with skeletons, and seems to listen to a clamor more moving, more sorrowful, than even the clamor of the dying: the clamor of the dead.

The terrific vision of death overwhelmed Doctor Miranda, haunted him with implacable persistence. The dead were anonymous, unknown beings, ignored, friends, just and unjust, repentant and unrepentant, Chispas . . . Bellegarde . . . Sister San Ligorio . . . Socarraz . . . Socarraz the impenitent. . . . A new anxiety weighed on his apostolic heart. He was thinking of those souls who had become perverted in the course of the war, who persisted on their false path, who had strayed away from God for all eternity.

But was this reality? Was it a dream, a delirium? To rest his tired eyes he lifted them to Heaven and there saw the moon tottering, a pale, bloodless moon which seemed to stray about like the corpse of a heavenly body, unburied, wandering in immensity.

He turned his gaze for a moment toward the rear. Another dead body. . . . Whose was it? Roberto's! Stretched out on his back, cold and stiff. One of the hands clenched on his bosom, the other holding the crucifix near his lips.

He took him in his arms, called him, laid the rigid body on his own heart, tried to bring back life, tried to warm the cold lips, the cold heart, but Roberto remained silent, rigid, one hand on his breast, the other on the crucifix.

No, it was impossible! To extinguish so much youth, so much intellect, so much nobility! The friend of his childhood, the friend of his soul. And hot tears began to scald his eyes and to flow down the forehead of Roberto. An intense cold, a cold like from the grave, as though between his arms

the corpses of his vision were multiplying and stretching far and wide pierced the soul of the good priest. He joined his own sobs with the sobs of the mourning hearths everywhere, with the plaints of the wounded, with the cries of the dying, with the mute groan of the dead:

**PEACE!**



